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THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE
ASSERTED, FROM ITS ADAPTATION TO THE
REAL STATE OF HUMAN NATURE,

IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXVII,

AT THE

LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A. *Lecture*

CANON OF SALISBURY. *1817*

BY

JOHN MILLER, M. A.

FELLOW OF WORCESTER COLLEGE.

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1817.

PREFACE.

THE following Lectures having been undertaken under somewhat unusual circumstances, (which, however, it is not necessary here to describe,) the Author is unwilling — indeed, has too much respect for the public — to submit them to general perusal without some explanation.

It has been observed, that “to read a great deal would be a sure preventive of much writing; because almost every one might find all he has to say already written.” The Author feels the truth of this observation; and does not doubt, that had his own reading been extensive, this present volume would never have appeared. *Why* then, under this consciousness, did he venture upon such a work?

He answers, simply because of the *possibility of doing good* in a situation, in which, if any good *may* be done, the *benefit* may be *general*; while he thinks it

hardly possible for any *loss* or *injury* to fall elsewhere, than upon *himself* singly. It is probable, that in reality nothing *can* be said (of that which is sound or valuable) which has not been said before; the presumption against any thing perfectly novel would be, in the first instance, that it was either weak or erroneous. Yet, while this acknowledgment ought certainly to exempt him from the charge of being a despiser of “authorities,” he cannot but think, that much is lost to the cause of true religion by *mere* following of authorities; and that a *too* scrupulous fear of going counter to established opinion (which fear he conceives to be a natural result of much, and the deepest reading) tends to restrain independent thought; and leads insensibly to the error of identifying Scripture itself with human interpretations of it.

Under such impressions he has been led to think, that one of the best *chances* (humanly speaking) of contributing—not *new*, but *fresh* support to the cause of truth, is likely to be found — in the “confessions” (if this term has not been too much desecrated by some irreverent applications of

it) *of a believer*, who after following, with only his original clew given him, a track and progress of his own, so far as to have gained his convictions by *reflection*, rather than by much *study*, has in the end found himself in the *highway* where others are, and *where he believes established truth to be*. In such light, as to its substance, is the present Work to be regarded. The Author entered upon it, in chief part, for this very reason, that he was able to write while his thoughts were fresh ; and while the result of them might both be proposed to judgment, and judged of, *independently*, without protection or favour. He does not speak thus boastfully ; but in humility, and fairness. Should the *matter* of his Lectures be considered unprofitable, it is his desire that they should perish at once in their own obscurity. On the other hand, if it should be esteemed differently, the greater correspondence with confirmed opinions which can *then* be pointed out in them will be the greater testimony in their favour. Being conscious that he is no wilful plagiarist, the writer himself is unambitious of any other

praise, than that of a sincere advocate of what is holy, and just, and good. He is, indeed, rejoiced to acknowledge obligation to some *very* near and dear friends, for assistances in his Work, of many kinds : but he knows of none, on account of which any apology is due from him to the general reader.

In deference to the kind and disinterested counsel of some friends in the University, whose judgment he esteems most highly, he has omitted some passages of considerable length, which were delivered from the pulpit; and thrown others into the form of, “ notes,” which may be either read, or passed over, without much interruption to the general subject. A very few passages have been inserted here, which were omitted in delivery on account of *time*; but scarcely a word has been *added* to the manuscript from which the Lectures were preached. Such verbal and other corrections also have been made, as might prevent the charge of wilful carelessness. With these exceptions, the Lectures now presented come forth as they were spoken.

The Author only desires to express farther, his grateful sense of that good opinion of his *intentions*, which procured him his appointment; and of all personal kindness experienced by him during the discharge of his office.

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EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates
“ to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the
“ University of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold
“ all and singular the said Lands or Estates upon
“ trust, and to the intents and purposes hereinafter
“ mentioned; that is to say, I will and appoint that
“ the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford for
“ the time being shall take and receive all the rents,
“ issues, and profits thereof, and (after all taxes, repa-
“ rations, and necessary deductions made) that he pay
“ all the remainder to the endowment of eight Divinity
“ Lecture Sermons, to be established for ever in the
“ said University, and to be performed in the manner
“ following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday
“ in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the
“ Heads of Colleges only, and by no others, in the
“ room adjoining to the Printing-House, between the
“ hours of ten in the morning and two in the afternoon,
“ to preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year

“ following, at St. Mary’s in Oxford, between the com-
“ mencement of the last month in Lent Term, and the
“ end of the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity
“ Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the
“ following Subjects — to confirm and establish the
“ Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schis-
“ matics—upon the divine authority of the holy Scrip-
“ tures—upon the authority of the writings of the pri-
“ mitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the
“ primitive Church — upon the Divinity of our Lord
“ and Saviour Jesus Christ — upon the Divinity of the
“ Holy Ghost — upon the Articles of the Christian
“ Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Nicene
“ Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divi-
“ nity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within
“ two months after they are preached, and one copy
“ shall be given to the Chancellor of the University,
“ and one copy to the Head of every College, and one
“ copy to the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one
“ copy to be put into the Bodleian Library; and the
“ expence of printing them shall be paid out of the re-
“ venue of the Land or Estates given for establishing
“ the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher
“ shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, be-
“ fore they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be
“ qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons,
“ unless he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts, at
“ least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or
“ Cambridge; and that the same person shall never
“ preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

The following List of Lecturers, with their subjects, which was first given in Mr. Falconer's Lecture for 1810, appearing to have its use and interest, is here reprinted verbatim from that Work, as far as it then went, and filled up to the present date.

1780. JAMES BANDINEL, D. D. of Jesus College; Public Orator of the University. The Author first establishes "the truth and authority of the Scriptures;—for the authenticity of the history being acknowledged, and the facts which are therein recorded being granted, the testimony of *miracles* and *prophecies*, joined to the *excellence of the doctrines*, is a clear and complete demonstration of our Saviour's divine commission." P. 37.

1781. TIMOTHY NEVE, D. D. Chaplain of Merton College. "The great point which the Author has principally attempted to illustrate is, that well known, but too much neglected truth, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and the Redeemer of mankind."

1782. ROBERT HOLMES, M. A. Fellow of New College. "On the prophecies and testimony of John the Baptist, and the parallel prophecies of Jesus Christ."

1783. JOHN COBB, D. D. Fellow of St. John's College. The subjects discussed are; "an inquiry after happiness; natural religion; the Gospel; repentance; faith; professional faith; practical faith; the Christian's privileges."

1784. JOSEPH WHITE, B. D. Fellow of Wadham College "A comparison of Mahometism and Christianity in their history, their evidence, and their effects."

1785. RALPH CHURTON, M. A. Fellow of Brase Nose College. "On the prophecies respecting the destruction of Jerusalem."
1786. GEORGE CROFT, M. A. late Fellow of University College. "The use and abuse of reason; objections against inspiration considered; the authority of the ancient Fathers examined; on the conduct of the first Reformers; the charge of intolerance in the Church of England refuted; objections against the Liturgy answered; on the evils of separation; conjectural remarks upon prophecies to be fulfilled hereafter."
1787. WILLIAM HAWKINS, M. A. late Fellow of Pembroke College. "On Scripture mysteries."
1788. RICHARD SHEPHERD, D. D. of Corpus Christi College. "The ground and credibility of the Christian Religion."
1789. EDWARD TATHAM, D. D. of Lincoln College. "The chart and scale of truth."
1790. HENRY KETT, M. A. Fellow of Trinity College. "The object" of these Lectures is "to rectify the misrepresentations of Mr. Gibbon and Dr. Priestley with respect to the history of the primitive Church."
1791. ROBERT MORRES, M. A. late Fellow of Brase Nose College. On "faith in general; faith in divine testimony no subject of question; internal evidence of the Gospel; effects of faith; religious establishments; heresies."
1792. JOHN EVELEIGH, D. D. Provost of Oriel College. "I shall endeavour," says the learned Author, "first to state regularly the substance of our religion from its earliest declarations in the Scriptures of both the

“ Old and New Testament to its complete publication
 “ after the resurrection of Christ; secondly, to give a
 “ sketch of the history of our religion from its complete
 “ publication after the resurrection of Christ to the
 “ present times, confining however this sketch, towards
 “ the conclusion, to the particular history of our own
 “ Church; thirdly, to state in a summary manner the
 “ arguments adducible in proof of the truth of our re-
 “ ligion; and fourthly, to point out the general sources
 “ of objection against it.”

1793. JAMES WILLIAMSON, B. D. of Queen's College. “The
 “ truth, inspiration, authority, and evidence of the
 “ Scriptures considered and defended.”

1794. THOMAS WINTLE, B. D. of Pembroke College. “The
 “ expediency, prediction, and accomplishment of the
 “ Christian redemption illustrated.”

1795. DANIEL VEYSIE, B. D. Fellow of Oriel College. “The
 “ doctrine of Atonement illustrated and defended.”

1796. ROBERT GRAY, M. A. late of St. Mary Hall. “On
 “ the principles upon which the Reformation of the
 “ Church of England was established.”

1797. WILLIAM FINCH, LL. D. late Fellow of St. John's
 College. “The objections of infidel historians and
 “ other writers against Christianity considered.”

1798. CHARLES HENRY HALL, B. D. late Student of Christ
 Church. “It is the purpose of these discourses to con-
 “ sider at large what is meant by the scriptural ex-
 “ pression, ‘fulness of time;’ or, in other words, to
 “ point out the previous steps by which God Almighty
 “ gradually prepared the way for the introduction and
 “ promulgation of the Gospel.” See the Preface.

1799. WILLIAM BARROW, LL. D. of Queen's College. These

Lectures contain "answers to some popular objections
"against the necessity or the credibility of the Chris-
"tian revelation."

1800. GEORGE RICHARDS, M. A. late Fellow of Oriel College. "The divine origin of Prophecy illustrated and
"defended."

1801. GEORGE STANLEY FABER, M. A. Fellow of Lincoln College. "Horæ Mosaicæ; or, a view of the Mosaical
"records with respect to their coincidence with profane
"antiquity, their internal credibility, and their connec-
"tion with Christianity."

1802. GEORGE FREDERIC NOTT, B. D. Fellow of All Souls' College. "Religious Enthusiasm considered."

1803. JOHN FARRER, M. A. of Queen's College. "On the mis-
"sion and character of Christ, and on the Beatitudes."

1804. RICHARD LAURENCE, LL. D. of University College.
"An attempt to illustrate those Articles of the Church
"of England which the Calvinists improperly consider
"as Calvinistical."

1805. EDWARD NARES, M. A. late Fellow of Merton College. "A view of the evidences of Christianity at the
"close of the pretended age of reason."

1806. JOHN BROWNE, M. A. late Fellow of Corpus Christi College. In these Lectures the following principle is variously applied in the vindication of religion; that
"there has been an infancy of the species, analogous to
"that of the individuals of whom it is composed, and
"that the infancy of human nature required a different
"mode of treatment from that which was suitable to
"its advanced state."

1807. THOMAS LE MESURIER, M. A. late Fellow of New

College. "The nature and guilt of Schism considered
"with a particular reference to the principles of the
"Reformation."

1808. JOHN PENROSE, M. A. of Corpus Christi College.
"An attempt to prove the truth of Christianity from
"the wisdom displayed in its original establishment,
"and from the history of false and corrupted systems
"of religion."

1809. JOHN BAYLEY SOMERS CARWITHEN, M. A. of St.
Mary Hall. "A view of the Brahminical religion in
"its confirmation of the truth of the sacred history, and
"in its influence on the moral character."

1810. THOMAS FALCONER, M. A. of Corpus Christi College.
"Certain principles in Evanson's 'Dissonance of the
"four generally received Evangelists,' &c. examined."

1811. JOHN BIDLAKE, D. D. of Christ Church. "The
"truth and consistency of divine revelation; with some
"remarks on the contrary extremes of Infidelity and En-
"thusiasm."

1812. RICHARD MANT, M. A. late Fellow of Oriel College.
"An appeal to the Gospel; or an inquiry into the jus-
"tice of the charge, alleged by Methodists and other
"objectors, that the Gospel is not preached by the Na-
"tional Clergy."

1813. JOHN COLLINSON, M. A. of Queen's College. "A
"key to the writings of the principal Fathers of the
"Christian Church, who flourished during the first
"three centuries."

1814. WILLIAM VAN MILDERT, D. D. Regius Professor of
Divinity, and Canon of Christ Church. "An inquiry
"into the general principles of Scripture-interpreta-
"tion."

1815. REGINALD HEBER, M. A. late Fellow of All Souls' College. "The personality and office of the Christian Comforter asserted and explained."

1816. JOHN HUME SPRY, M. A. of Oriel College. "Christian Unity doctrinally and historically considered."

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LECTURE I.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 14, 15.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

IN whatever manner we may be disposed to interpret these words of St. Paul, with respect to verbal or circumstantial differences ^a, their general precept must surely be pronounced, in these our own days, of universal application. Neither can the passage, as now belonging to ourselves, be understood otherwise than of the whole volume of canonical Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, of which we have virtually learnt so great a portion from St. Paul himself, as well as Timothy did ; and *all* from the same source from whence that portion was derived to him,—the Spirit of wisdom and of truth.

In the Scriptures, then, we have received a solemn trust committed to us ; and here is an apostolical exhortation directing us to hold fast

^a Macknight renders the verb ἐπιστάμενος, “ with which thou hast been *intrusted*.” See also Benson, on this place.

by them. The very tenor of the exhortation implies that we may let slip our hold: but the inference is equally clear, that we can only do so under peril of an awful penalty,—no less, than the loss of that wisdom which “maketh
“wise unto salvation.”

Now looking at this passage of divine writ in this manner, and then glancing to the real, existing state of men and things around us, a very familiar picture presents itself to the mind, of no small interest.

It is manifest, that this our hereditary possession is bequeathed to a vast diversity and inequality, as well of tempers and moral dispositions, as of intellectual faculties, and consequent attainments in human knowledge. In connection with which remark the thought will naturally suggest itself,—that the Bible contemplates and recognizes such a diversity, and provides for *all* accordingly.

Cf. Matth.
xix. 11, 12.
1 Cor. iii. 2.
Heb. v. 12,
14.

It does. And in our further progress, when we come to search into the fulness of holy Scripture, *once received* as a law of life, we shall have occasion to perceive what a support is here to its divine authority.

But while it does, and while we rejoice in it, and give thanks unto the Giver of all good that the case is so; there is yet an earlier point to be considered, of very vital importance, to which this comfortable thought does not extend.

We, at this day, cannot produce any present visible attestation of a Deity, in confirmation of our faith. The great mystery of our faith and hope has been confided to a written volume. Christianity has long become, in this respect, only a record of historical transmission. And, by natural consequence, lapse of time, and change of languages,—in short, all the common outward wearing of the world's progress, have so wrought upon its external evidences, that to digest and handle *these* properly has come to require a very considerable portion indeed of ability and learning. The point, therefore, just above referred to is involved in this question; “What effect may “ this inequality of powers be likely to produce, “ (under certain very supposable circumstances;) “ not, in respect of the interpretation of truth “ once admitted; but in respect of the reception “ of Christianity, as a divine revelation, in the “ first instance?” And a point of especial interest this is, at a time when so much boast is made of *knowledge*, as an universal possession: so much, that piety which cannot speak is often forced to sit down almost abashed before a many-worded tyranny of mere perishable human wisdom; and the homage of assent, which is due only to the majesty of eternal truth, is yielded to a phantom of assumed superiority, whose arguments may justly be characterized, as “ admitting of “ no answer, and yet producing no conviction.”

It is desirable, with reference to *this* point, to assume, upon the most admissible grounds we may, something like an average of men's capacity: not by taking a speculative mean between profound ignorance and transcendent ability; but from observation and recollection of familiar cases, such as any of ourselves have actually seen and known, among those members of an enlightened Christian community, who have enjoyed the benefit of an ordinary discipline, such as the customs of the day prescribe.

Now what judgment can we, in sincerity, form upon such estimate as this?

I am persuaded it must be, that the average of solid capacity and knowledge is not to be set high; that the true strength of man is not to be sought in any *intellectual*, but in a *moral* excellence; that neither in the one, however, nor in the other, can he hope to escape through all the difficulties wherewith he is encompassed, without possession of some sure refuge, in the season of pressing danger; which refuge is only to be found in some one simple and unreserved submission to the commands of an infallible guide.

That picture, then, which was affirmed to present itself to the mind, as of so great interest, upon comparison of the precept in the text with the appearances of real life, is now before us. It is to be seen in "the condition of an educated" person, and more especially one that has en-

“joyed the benefit of a religious discipline, under the care of believing parents, now arrived at the season of more independent thought, in a Christian kingdom.”

Before he was born, there was extant in that country a book, professing to be an authentic revelation from the true God ;—a book, the possession of which is regarded as a special inheritance, and the kingdoms possessing it as highly exalted, by that very single circumstance, above the level of other nations. That book made up the faith of his fathers. In obedience to its appointment, he was himself baptized, in his infancy, unto belief and acceptance of the same. He has been instructed in it ever since. He has been taught of all things to respect and reverence it. Out of this he has been bidden to take his principles, his hopes, and his fears: dreading that *hell*, which it denounces as a final punishment; aspiring to that *heaven*, which it promises as a final reward. Through this he has been accustomed, from his childhood, to bow at the name of Jesus Christ, as a Saviour who came to redeem him and all mankind; and to pray, daily and habitually, for protection and assistance from on high. In short, reverence for **THE BIBLE** has “grown with his growth, and “strengthened with his strength.” It has been so long an engrafted part of all his knowledge, that it has become as it were his native stock.

It is mixed up with all his ideas, so that he can no longer separate them from its influence. He has had, as yet, no notion of despising or rejecting the Bible; no conception of any such appalling possibility, as that it may be false, and he himself be but a poor deluded bigot, and his belief, after all, nothing but deception! If he has heard or read of "infidels" and "heretics," it has been but with youthful unconcern: while any thing he may have noticed of offence and actual wickedness, during the progress of a few years comparatively innocent, must have tended to convince him of the *truth* of all that he has been taught to believe. For even a child may understand that wickedness, in others, wants correction. And this is something he has always learnt; that the Bible is against wickedness; and religion given to man to root it out.

But as years advance, and he goes forth among his fellows with more of the opening faculties of man, his condition is beset with strange perplexities. *Inquirers* are every where around him; and he finds, that this book, which he has been always taught with such scrupulous care to believe, and reverence, and obey, as being the sure word of God, is the subject of all manner of disputings, and disquiet, and gainsayings. He finds some, for example, doubting its historical evidence, and some offended at its matter; some, again, busied in curtailing its doctrines, and

others in extending them too far. In short, scarcely a conceivable form of scepticism or of heresy can be imagined, which he does not now find actually prevailing, under an avowed general reception of that holy record, of which he himself still finds no reason to think otherwise, than as he has been taught to think before.

Yet all disputants would claim him, as a hearer, to their several pretensions; and every one would gladly gain him, as a proselyte, to his particular cause. All, too, appeal with apparently equal confidence to the ordeal of *inquiry*! By which I mean, an examination throughout, and in detail, not only of the credentials of every outward kind, with which Christianity, as a revelation, is provided; but also, of all metaphysical and speculative objections, of whatever description, which the spirit of resistance has advanced, or may advance, against it. What, therefore, shall he do?

If he be himself a person of a keen and ardent temperament; inquisitive in other things; of a mind impatient under partial information, and sensitive to objection; rendered uneasy by it; and not quite prepared, after all, when the trial comes, to overrule it at once within himself, by the strength of individual conviction;—if he be of this temper, and, at the same time, stored (as it is then probable he will be) with a sufficient share of ability and learning to un-

ravel the intricacies of argument, and to balance the weightier against the weaker reason;—all will be well. In this case, there is no need of much perplexity. This temper will boldly fight its way through all the subtleties of proof, and all the evasions of sophistry. It will accept the challenge, and inquire; and if it but reserve to itself (which we suppose) a *foundation* in its early impressions, doubtless it will itself be strengthened by inquiry, and truth will be benefited. It is not for this temper that so much anxiety is wanted, and so much sympathy.

But suppose the Christian, now for the first time entangled, by himself, in all these difficulties, to be of another frame; of a disposition, meek and pious; of attainments, at most only respectable, or, more probably, inferior; not blind, nevertheless, to the pretensions and deserts of others, though wishing to remain at ease amidst his own possessions, if without weakness or intolerance he may:—suppose him to be one, that has so far tasted of the fruits of practical holiness, as to have no quick sense of subordinate objections; not disposed to deny an objector's claim to reasonable satisfaction, if properly demanded, but altogether indisposed himself to *argue* upon points to which he feels not fully competent, in the detail, and which have never caused himself any uneasiness:—suppose the Christian's disposition, I say, to be of *this*

sort : what shall be done here? And surely there are many, very many such, among the partakers even of a learned education ; nor is it unreasonable to believe and hope, that the equal mercy of a good Providence hath so fenced the wants of a less active intellectual power with a stronger principle of faith! Let it be considered how the case stands with *such* a person. Shall all the watchfulness of parents and instructors, throughout the progress of his early discipline, all that he has been taught, and all his obedience hitherto in the greatest of all concerns, profit him nothing? If it even be admissible, as a sound opinion, that the *man's* first proceeding may allowedly be, to doubt, or to unlearn, (or even wilfully to provoke the hazard of unlearning,) all that the *boy* has been "assured of,"—what advantage is there, or can there be, in a Christian education? It was not so that St. Paul estimated the care of Lois and Eunice for the child Timothy. Wherefore let 2 Tim. i. 5. such a one, as we have been describing, not be ashamed of an Apostle's counsel ; but resolve, at all events, in the first instance, to *continue in the things which he has learned, knowing from whom he hath learned them ; and that from a child he has known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* If but in hypothesis only, out of deference to Lect. iii. §. 2.

conflicting human opinions, he be once beguiled to part from this *anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast*, what shall bring him afterwards, through all the storms wherewith he will find himself encompassed, unto the haven where he should be!

It may probably be objected; that “this looks
“ more like a blind and indolent credulity, than
“ a reasonable faith.”

Zech. viii.
19.

But the case represented is one, that is either not feelingly enough considered, or else too studiously concealed, and therefore not properly treated. And it is the sense of its being indeed a *real* case, of the very highest practical importance, and well deserving express attention, strengthened by persuasion that an humble and impartial view of it must be recognized with welcome in many hearts, such as *love the truth and peace* for its own sake only, that has led to the present undertaking. Excusable, nay necessary, as it is, to set the mark of praiseworthy attainment at its highest, when we would either develop the true loftiness of human intellect, or exhort to the utmost beneficial use of rare advantages, that never can recur; and impossible as it is, on these and other frequent occasions, not to appeal to the very highest measure of capacity which man possesses;—there is always danger that such exhortations may too much discourage conscious mediocrity, or inferiority

of talent, by making it feel, to what an immeasurable distance it is thrown behind in the race, as *there* represented. For it is infinitely painful to be overlooked beforehand, simply on account of a disqualification which we cannot avoid; nor are there many provocations more likely to render average capacities narrow in spirit, as well as in extent, than that of being compelled to perceive themselves thus neglected. Wherever, therefore, it becomes at once both possible and expedient to take part with them, (and surely such a case occurs, when we come to speak concerning a prize at stake, of universal competition and unspeakable importance too!) these, which have been described, are the very dispositions and capacities to be most respected, encouraged, and comforted.

Before, then, we concede the point, that what we thus encourage is not "faith," but "credulity," let us see how it appears under the light of an illustration.

Suppose that of a company of men called to the possession of a temporal inheritance, any one becomes disquieted by an imagination, that he cannot live therein, in safety and security, except in a mansion of his own building; let him set to work, and build. He has the property; and it is open to him so to do. His own right of inclination justifies the act, where nothing interferes to forbid it. But if there be fit houses

in that heritage already, and more of his less enterprising brethren finding these ready to their hand, and pleasant places to dwell in; *houses full of all good things which they filled not, and wells digged which they digged not*; shall be willing and desirous to take up their abode here, and enter into the labours of other men; —shall he that builded for himself therefore justly charge them with sloth, or cowardice, or lukewarm zeal? And if these latter, entering in to such prepared heritage, shall honestly furnish and make clean their dwelling; shall keep the fire alive and blazing on the hearth to heat and to enlighten it; shall dispense around them the contributions of a generous hospitality, every man to the best of his ability:—if, again, receiving their portion thus, like the children of Reuben and of Gad, they are yet willing to go forth, to build, or to war, if their captain shall call for them;—what shall forbid that these be pronounced to act neither an unwise, nor an unreasonable, nor an unsafe part?

Deut. vi. 11.

Cf. John iv.
38.

Numb.
xxxii.

To pass, then, from illustration to a plain statement of real life.

If a devout reception of the Bible, as the word of God, in the first instance, for no other reason than because it was presented as such; if a hearty submission to that word, and to the will, of God, and a fear of offending him; if a confession of, and a reliance upon, the name of

Jesus Christ, and on the help of divine grace; if these, received *implicitly* in the beginning, and then pursued, because they were found to supply the spirit with satisfaction and consolation in its performance of daily duty; if these do not, even in their lowest and weakest proportion, make up an intelligible, and real, and saving form of Christian faith; then, where and what is the belief of thousands, and tens of thousands, of our simpler brethren, inheritors, we trust, no less than ourselves of the hope of salvation? Or wherein are they better than the heathen, except in that they live under a happier light of human knowledge, and of civil government? It is a blessing to be *enabled* to inquire: and God give unto us, as many as enjoy the ability, grace to profit by it! But to *insist* upon inquiry, (I mean, inquiry more or less sceptical,) indiscriminately; or in any manner, which the Spirit of grace, manifested by its fruits, has not itself suggested to the believer's own heart; this, be the portion of ability vouchsafed what it may, is neither the way to discover truth, nor to promote unity.

Nevertheless, I am well aware how startling any proposition is, in these present days of widely circulated information, which may awaken, though but on its first utterance, the thought of *implicit faith*; even though it be demanded to no human interpretations, but only

to the word of God itself. It is obvious, with what recoil a variety of tempers and attainments will shrink back from it.

1. For example; to the man of "liberality," of speculative turn, and general attainments, affable and accomplished; not conversant, from any immediate cause, with divine things in particular; and accustomed, himself, to require and to give a reason in those human matters with which he has to do, and where it may well be given;—to him, such a thought will very probably awaken others, of ignorance, prejudice, and darkness.

2. Much more, then, if such liberality of sentiment be extended into "free-thinking," will the unbeliever so pronounce upon a faith, which he himself esteems so lightly: or the half-believer, who will naturally rejoice in contributing, by its rejection, to the increase of that wavering spirit, which is so favourable to his own views.

3. Again; to the man of learning and comprehensive ability united together; to whom the labyrinths of research are easy; and who has a sort of proprietor's delight in showing forth the treasures of antiquity, as a possession of his own; it will appear like indolence and weakness.

4. Again; to the man well versed in all the ways of theological controversy, and all the melancholy errors recorded in Church history; and

tremblingly alive, in consequence, to the corruptions flowing from a servile superstition ; who is thereby made habitually, and prudently, jealous of a credulity, so evidently capable of gross abuse ; it runs the hazard of appearing in the light either of unmanly timidity, or of dangerous fanaticism.

But however these things may be, the question of faith is one, in which there are souls at issue. While, therefore, we respect the claims of all, and would desire, in humility, to exercise *true* candour and liberality towards all men ; while we honour learning, and bless the gracious order of an all-wise Providence, by which a few are so enriched and endowed with more excellent ability, for the benefit of the many ; while with gratitude we reverence as well the courage, as the circumspection, of orthodoxy ;—we must not, through an over-willingness to allow their due to others, forego, to the soul's peril, that which is our own. By which I mean, (forbearing, for the moment, all consideration of positive *duty*,) that individual *right* which we possess, as candidates for Christ's kingdom of glory, of resting our faith and hope, not upon any proof, or series of proofs, which scepticism has made it customary to insist upon, to show the truth of our religion ; but, upon that which best attests the *divine authority of holy Scripture* to our own hearts, according to the propor-

tion of means and opportunities, of personal dispositions and abilities, with which it has been the pleasure of the Almighty severally to invest us^b.

There being, then, according to commonly received language and opinion, two general divisions of the evidences by which the religion of Jesus Christ is commended to men's acceptance—*external* and *internal*; it is my intention, in furtherance of the end just now proposed, to advance a familiar argument of the latter kind: not with a purpose to confute any who are disposed, or determined, to *object*; but with a desire, under the blessing of Providence, to furnish consolation to many such as are disposed to *believe* on broad and simple grounds: to those,

^b Provided only, that we do not confound Christianity itself with any form only of professing it, lest we fall into the error of taking up positions, which cannot be maintained; and expose ourselves, besides, to a yoke of oppression, in particulars, which might not well be borne. Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to express a persuasion, that our own case happily is such, in the established Church of England, that we may rightly, and are bound to, receive the faith of our forefathers, as delivered to us in its authorized form, by the same measure of acceptance, *in kind*, as we receive Scripture itself: not hastily taking part against it (as so many do) on account of incidental or subordinate objections; but accepting it, in Christian duty, *as it is*, and abiding by it, until, *after experiment of holy living*, it shall be proved perilous, or at least inadequate, to the soul's welfare, according to the very terms of Scripture.

who see, intuitively, the fearful portion of the infidel, and are sure that *he* is wrong ; and who yet, in the midst of a perverse generation, may want sympathy, in secret, to justify their faith to their own *judgments*, as well as to their *hearts*. For they must not be uncandid and uncharitable to the unbeliever : this, they see, Lect. iii. §. 2. is at once hurtful to their own cause, and un-
availing with him : yet, for various reasons, they cannot fully strive with him with his own weapons ; and he will not admit theirs.

God forbid I should be thought desirous either of suppressing, or of shunning, any *right* inquiry into the most momentous of all subjects ! (though, undoubtedly, there are abstruser branches of that search, which but very few are competent to set in order properly :) I would only suggest a *disposition*, and a *kind*, of research, apparently more fit for the *majority* of those who seek to be true Christians ; a disposition, not wantonly bent to discover doubts, and by discussion to provoke difficulties ; but to perceive and comprehend the truth, through a real desire of obtaining, and an expectation of finding it.

The proposition which will form the topic of the ensuing Lectures will be, in substance, this :
that, **LOOKING AT THE RELIGION PROPOSED TO OUR ACCEPTANCE IN HOLY SCRIPTURE, AS WE THERE FIND IT ; ACCEPTING IT, FIRST, BY THE**

COURTESY OF GOOD WILL, AS TRUE, FOR THE VERY FACT'S SAKE, THAT IT IS PRESENTED TO US UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AS IT IS ; AND WEIGHING ITS PRETENSIONS, NOT BY ANY CONFORMITY, OR NON-CONFORMITY, WITH PRECONCEIVED ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES, BUT BY ITS CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE ACTUAL PHENOMENA OF MORAL NATURE, AND WITH THE HISTORY OF MAN ; THERE IS AN EVIDENCE OF TRUTH AND AUTHORITY IN HOLY WRIT ITSELF, WHICH WILL THEN CONSTRAIN US TO ABIDE BY IT : WHICH EVIDENCE IS TO BE SEEN IN ITS SUFFICIENT AND ADMIRABLE ADAPTATION TO ALL OUR WANTS AND WEAKNESSES, OUR HOPES AND DESIRES ; IN ITS COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE ; IN ITS INHERENT, ELASTIC, AND PERPETUAL APPLICABILITY TO ALL THE JUST DEMANDS OF MAN, THE CREATURE MADE SUBJECT TO ITS JURISDICTION, FOR EVER.

Such being the declared object of the Lectures, in order that we may not be supposed to proceed blindly, without respect of necessary conditions, let it be acknowledged, that such an argument (however plausible a case might be made out upon it) could not be admitted to avail at all, if it were not, beforehand, really the judgment of wise, and learned, and honest men, that external and historical proofs of Christianity have been abundantly and reasonably established. For though internal evidence may be and

is, in sterling weight, as much superior to external, as a saving faith is to a mere historical assent; yet there is an *introductory* character and office belonging to the latter, which renders it absolutely indispensable. External and historical proofs form, as it were, the *title deeds* of our inheritance. To these, therefore, we must at least always be able to have recourse: we must know where they are; whether, in particular instances, we can then interpret them fully for ourselves, or only through assistance of others. But the possession and safe keeping of them *somewhere*, is essential.

This being acknowledged, I forbear to lengthen a Lecture, merely prefatory, by urging considerations which might well commend a ready making of the admission hereupon demanded. It shall suffice, at present, briefly to vindicate the choice of such an argument before such an audience; and to state the method after which the inquiry will be pursued.

If, then, (notwithstanding what has been advanced,) it be objected, that a learned audience does not properly admit of an appeal to that foundation of belief, which is the foundation of the faith of the vulgar: I reply by asking even the most learned to search out of his own heart, honestly, whether, in reality, his faith does ultimately rest upon any different foundation from theirs? or whether it be possible, until we ex-

ercise it under the dominion of an unreserved and unfeigned faith, to apply the learning which is here acquired to its most effectual purpose? For should the labours of a learned, but a wavering mind even prove efficacious (through appointment of an all-wise Providence, educing good from whatever source it pleases) to the benefit of *others*; still, is it possible for them to ensure an equal benefit to the indecisive spirit itself, from whence they proceed? *This* is a question for great learning or superior talent to consider; lest haply, after having proved an instrument of *general* good, it should itself *be found a cast-away*.

1 Cor. ix.
27.

But I think it will appear sufficiently as we go on, that no discouragement is hereby offered either to learning or to industry: wherefore I am persuaded, that such elementary faith does really contain in it the *true* strength of the very strongest, as well as of the weakest among us all; so much so, that, in fact, without it all our seeming acquired strength becomes only our greatest danger.

Cf. Lectt.
iv. v.

For it must be by suffering themselves precipitately to be challenged as *learned* or as *reasonable* men, that so many are ensnared, through these temptations insidiously offered to their vanity, to forget their only *invulnerable* character—of *believing Christians*; or that some are even shamed out of it. *Perverse oppositions of science*

1 Tim. vi.
20.

falsely so called tempting us to yield to an affected candour points never perhaps to be recovered ; to contend with objectors on their own ground alone ; in short, to submit spiritual things to the vain measure of natural ;—these have beguiled us. The aspects of a great portion of the professed literary and scientific world in particular ; the cases that may be seen of so many of our own most promising students, almost as soon as they are once detached from what is represented as the “thralldom of early “ prejudices,” allow no other interpretation ^c.

Cf. 1 Cor.
ii. 13, 14.

I know what may be said of this ; and it must take its course. But it being no matter of doubtful speculation, that both as a Nation and a Church we stand, at this hour, in a posture of much jeopardy, it becomes too oppressive a conviction to be withheld, that if we would indeed have GOD for our Protector, with CHRIST for our Saviour, and the HOLY SPIRIT for our Comforter, we must return to a more primitive and healthful state of mind, and receive him first *unequivocally* as our *Lawgiver*. Thus only shall acquired knowledge become truly profitable ;

^c Does not the same truth appear, even yet more seriously, through the failures of several eminent writers in their arguments for Natural Religion, where, by giving up point after point to meet the Deist on his own ground, they have ceded him a fair advantage ? See Ellis's “ Knowledge of Divine “ Things from Revelation, &c.”

and it is on this ground that *implicit faith* appears amongst the most reasonable, because amongst the most indispensable, of all things.

This being said in vindication of the principle on which the present inquiry will proceed, I would subjoin the mention of a hope, which, under existing circumstances, has led to the selection of a *general*, in preference to a *confined*, subject.

That all real believers in the revelation of Jesus Christ, but more especially, that all we who belong to the same venerable Church, must be of one mind in our estimate of what the Christian state truly desirable *is*, can admit of no doubt. We *must* place it in a piety, at once fervent and practical, yet chastised, sober, and reasonable; at once spiritual, and regulated; lasting, and obedient.

That there must be a way (for such as will become teachers) of setting forth the scheme revealed in holy Scripture, agreeably to such estimate; so as to convey real, and spiritual, and undisguised truth, without either suppressing or exaggerating peculiar doctrines beyond their just proportion, as vital, yet still relative, *parts* of a *consistent whole*;—this also must be certain, how few soever may attain to it.

Nevertheless, that, as things are, all do not follow the most excellent way, can admit of no doubt either. We cannot be following the best

way, either of teaching or of learning, so long as party differences are suffered to break down respectively the fences of *forbearance* and of *duty*; and an almost exclusive attention to special points of controverted doctrine usurps that first place in our contemplations, and in our affections too, which ought to be devoted to the *whole* revelation of divine mercy;—to universal Christianity.

By which expression of “universal Christianity,” I do not mean Christianity divested of its mysteries, or peculiar doctrines, or precepts, to render it a vapid object of universal acceptance, or rather non-resistance; God forbid! But *entire* Christianity; that one continuous dispensation of divine mercy, which is the subject of both Testaments; which, as the method of restoring fallen man to his Maker’s favour, is adapted to the state and nature of man; which, therefore, to study at the fountain head, and in its continuity, must needs instruct us best in the mode of administering its truths to others, since it will teach us best to know *ourselves*.

Cf. Matth.
vii. 5.
Luke vi. 39.

Herein, then, lies a hope, by such view of Scripture as that now to be offered of withdrawing attention for a while from subordinate arguments, and from a morbid thirst for too literal definition in things manifestly and mercifully undefined, to a quiet and uncontentious examination of the internal excellence and character

of holy Writ itself. And the intention must stand or fall by its own merits^d.

^d If it may be done without breach of duty, (as I trust it may,) I would awaken attention to the *inconsistency*, following in the train of too close definition, of too rigid adherence to the code either of one fixed school of interpretation, or another, as it may be traced through *this* circumstance; that, in their practical labours, “the disciples of the two great rival systems, which so much divide the Christian world, do virtually change positions; and either, in effect, maintains the other’s conflict.” For when they, as many as espouse the gloomier creed, in their invitation and entreaty to sinners throw open the gates of mercy *wide as the east is from the west*, (even going the length, sometimes, of systematically representing the greater load of loathsomeness and guilt as the greater recommendation to divine favour;) what do they, but acknowledge, in despite of themselves, the *universality* of redeeming grace? what do they but pursue a narrow and *confined end*, through something almost more than *open means*? Again; when they, of livelier hope, whose joy and consolation it is to magnify the “*universal end*,” do still so narrow and constrain the path to it, as to leave it manifest that only very few can reach the prize of glory; not simply by representing it as “*strait*,” (we have full authority for that,) but by so dwelling in particular duties, as almost to pass the bounds of possible compliance with them; what do *they*, in turn, but virtually confess the solemn truth of a strict “*predestination*,” (so far, at least, as such doctrine may be involved in our Lord’s own saying, that *many are called, but few chosen*,) pursuing an *open end* through *restricted means*?

I make no comment upon these appearances; only suggesting them as matter for reflection. But if they exist, and if the above thought concerning them be at all just, it should surely read us a strong lesson against too eager and hasty an adoption of partial prejudices. It should make us careful,

The inquiry will be pursued after the following method.

We shall first state what we conceive to be the *manner of appeal* now made by the Most High to us his reasonable creatures, by presenting a view of Christianity, as the *dispensation of* Lect. ii. *the Spirit*. Certain important deductions, arising from this view, will then be considered, and pro- Lect. iii. posed for acceptance as Christian axioms.

By this process, foundation being laid for viewing holy Scripture connectedly, as was proposed, we shall go on to *assert its divine authority from its wonderful, intuitive correspondence with the* Lect. iv. *general state of human nature*. Which assertion being, in two following Lectures, practically ex- Lect. v. vi. hibited to the reader's own impartial judgment, in a selection of examples; we shall, in the seventh Lecture, consider the fulness of holy Scrip- Lect. vii. ture to satisfy the wants and wishes of an *individual* Christian; and in the last, its adaptation to Lect. viii. his condition, as a traveller, *in company*, through an imperfect world.

If these propositions be made good, the argument from them will not be inconsiderable. And if (where every thing is meant to be spoken in humility, and in the faith and fear of God)

that we do not *exceed*, while we do not *suppress*, any part of our commission; and that we be careful both to receive and to explain God's promises, "in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture."

any thing, however simple, shall reach the conscience, or convince the judgment, so as either to strengthen and confirm good principles, or to awaken charitable ones ; let that atone, in some part, for defects of execution, and rejoice against censure. Whatever may be said in error, let it be avoided ; only let it be treated with candour. But whatever shall strictly correspond with acknowledged soundness of interpretation, let *that* be received, not as a tale often told, and undeserving of further attention ; but as an unconscious addition to the evidence, that *truth is one, and uniform* ; and let us pray for grace, that all Christian people may rejoice daily more and more in the knowledge and confession of it!

LECTURE II.

GALATIANS iii. 24.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

THE connection here represented as subsisting between the Law and the Gospel, involves a view of Christianity, which, by more full expansion and contemplation, appears highly capable of strengthening in the truth such brethren as have already implicitly received it.

Such expansion will accordingly be the object of the present Lecture: in which it will be endeavoured to illustrate this proposition; that the appeal made by the Almighty to his rational creatures, to bring them to a knowledge of himself, has been *progressive*; progressive, after an order of which the character cannot be more distinctly expressed than in words used by St. Paul, to describe the different stages of human existence; I mean in that passage wherein he says, *There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*—*Howbeit that was not first* ^{1 Cor. xv. 44, 46.} *which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

Such is the relation between the characters of the two great divine dispensations, and such the order of their succession. The MOSAIC, or NATURAL, came first; and the EVANGELICAL, or SPIRITUAL, followed. When I use these terms, I mean by “natural,” that which in its character and conduct is more palpable and visible, and in its application directed more to the *present* motives of the creatures who were called to obey it; and by “spiritual,” that which is more refined in its own features and character, and addressed to man, as to a spiritual and immortal being.

For the more full comprehension of this view of revelation in all its branches, and for positive authority to sanction that which will be now pursued as a method of inquiry; let reference be made to those storehouses of meditation on the subject—the chapter from whence the text is taken, and that which follows it; the general tenor of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and that comparison between the Law and the Gospel held out in the third chapter of St. Paul’s second Epistle to the Corinthians; *If the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones was glorious,—how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?* and the context.

2 Cor. iii.
7, 8.

I shall not however enter here into any detailed comparison of “glory” between the Law

and the Gospel^a; nor into any consideration of the Law, as *typical* of the Gospel; neither will regard be had to any earlier, less definite, and more obscure dispensations of the Almighty towards men, previous to the delivery of the Mosaic covenant. These are topics that have been frequently and ably illustrated by ingenious and learned writers; and they do not strictly concern our present purpose. The present Lecture will be confined to its own peculiar object; viz. “an examination of the *manner* “of appeal made to mankind, under the two “great and explicit, and specially recorded dispensations, which make up the chief sum “of the Oracles of God.”

What then is it, which we think may be discovered in this *manner*, calculated to dispose our understanding and affections favourably towards the divine authority of holy Scripture?

We assume that the Bible is what it professes to be—the statute-book of an everlasting kingdom; and that both of the two very different parts into which it is divided proceed, and have always been understood to proceed, from the same common Author. Now this being so, a

^a I mean, comparisons of *essential* glory: such (e. g.) as might arise from contrasting their respective efficacy, as methods of obtaining the divine favour; or the measure of *promise* vouchsafed to each; or the character and persons of their respective Promulgators.

very little consideration may persuade us to accept the statement of our seventh Article ; that “ the Old Testament is not contrary to the New ; but that both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind through one only Mediator.”

For we cannot suppose the Divine Mind to have set forth two several schemes of moral government, dissimilar from the very foundation. The *substance* of the divine counsels must be indestructible. The appointment, for a season, of institutions, adapted to the state and necessities of man ; and their abrogation in the fulness of time, when they had fulfilled a purpose intended ; this is consistent with every notion we can form of perfect wisdom. But the fundamental will of the Almighty we cannot suppose subject to change ; neither can any voice that has once proceeded out of the mouth of God, for the general moral guidance of his creatures, ever sink into a dead letter^b ; so sink, I mean, as to lose all force of obligation upon subjects on whose conscience an eternal law is written, (as it is called, “ of nature ;”) with which such moral word of revelation is in harmony ; *Heaven and earth shall pass away*, but the word which God

Matt. xxiv.
35.

^b Compare with this, and with the whole scope of the Lecture, the first chapter of St. Peter's first Epistle ; particularly towards the end of the chapter. Compare also what is said in Lecture V. concerning our Lord's parables.

hath spoken shall not pass away. Admitting the latter Testament therefore to be true, and embracing it as such; it appears hardly optional to do otherwise than admit, as a truth involved in this, that the substance of the elder dispensation must in effect be one and the same with that of the later. Wherein then do the two differ; and wherein do they agree?

An illustration may be borrowed on this point from comparing our Saviour's declaration, that he gave to his disciples *a new commandment*, John xiii. 34. with St. John's language in the seventh and eighth verses of the second chapter of his first Epistle^c. It was *a new commandment*; but how? Not new in letter or in effect, but in extent and sanction; new in revealed motives; for it was *founded*, now, *upon better promises*; new Heb. viii. 6. in respect of the example set for its fulfilment, and the encouragement offered to the keeping of it; new also, (or comparatively become so,) by reason of the practical degradation and disuse into which it had fallen. But in purpose and effect it was "old;" in respect of its inherent tendency to bring man into present ease and comfort, (and as *we* now know—of a future and

See Note on 1 John ii. 7, 8. from Abp. Secker, in the Family Bible.

^c John xiii. 34. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.

1 John ii. 7, 8. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning, &c.

glorious enjoyment also,) it was *the same which was from the beginning*.

So is it, we think, with the great *realities* of the plan of salvation.

From the first utterance of the gracious promise concerning the *seed of the woman*, Redemption has been one uniform and abiding scheme, under whatever varieties of circumstance. The *chief corner stone* of the temple of believers has been one and immoveable—*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. The real *sacrifice and atonement* for sin has been the same from the beginning—the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. That all *acceptable obedience* must have been under every form of dispensation a work of *divine grace*, is a proposition which cannot be denied, without involving virtually some portion of Pelagian heresy, as to the power of man's unassisted strength. Consequently, there must in effect always have been an operation of one and the same *Divine Spirit*, under both covenants. Lastly, the real end and crown of faithful obedience must have been always the same; I mean, the *resurrection unto life eternal*, and an invisible future state of immortal glory^d.

Cf. Pascal's
Thoughts.

Heb. xiii. 8.

Rev. xiii. 8.

Cf. Heber's
Bampton
Lectures.
Lect. VI.

^d On this last great point, *the resurrection unto life eternal*, I cannot forbear referring, as to an example peculiarly illustrative of the whole position of this Lecture, to that memorable argument of our Saviour; (Matt. xxii. 32, &c.) *As*

These *realities*, then, of the great plan of salvation have always been the same.

We add, that this great counsel of divine love has been not only uniform and one in its own *substance*, but that it has been uniformly working its way through the same substantial state of outward things; I mean, through the same furtherances, (in kind,) and the same impediments. It has had to operate upon the same moral constitution of human nature; to travel onward through the same order of natural providences. God has not altered (as far as is apparent to us) any of the courses of the mere physical world by the death, or since the death

touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: because this passage seems to contain a sort of argument, exactly fitted at once to prove the real existence of the doctrine at the time referred to, and at the same time to account for its obscurity. To us, with the Scriptures of the New Testament in our hands, and with an assured knowledge of the great truth of everlasting life derived abundantly from later sources, it is an easy thing to fill up the blanks of this defective form of argument. To the Jews, however, it could not but be involved in much obscurity; and, indeed, even now it is a sort of passage that is by no means plainly its own interpreter. I think it is rather one which we ourselves should probably pass by, as proclaiming merely a solemn appellation of the Deity, and not look to as the vehicle of so chief a doctrine, had it not been rendered so prominent to a Christian's eye, by our Lord's above-mentioned application of it.

Ps. xix. 2. of his Son. *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night certifieth knowledge*; the lights of heaven rule in the firmament; and *seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter* return, just as they have ever done. Man, too, continues the same as ever; born with the same nature; tempted by the same passions, if unrestrained; liable to fall through the same licentiousness of an obstinate will. *We* do not fail to hear sometimes, among the infinite perversities of contradiction, a voice of unbelief, not differing in spirit from the taunt of the scoffers in St. Peter's days; *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* And, accepting this challenge in the gross, let us reply; True: and for that very reason we believe with the more assured certainty, that the same Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and hath reigned always. Had it been otherwise, and had the laws, whether of physical or moral nature, appeared subject to mutability or caprice, we might have doubted. As things *are*, we are willing to believe thus far, for the very fact's sake—of their consistency.

Thus, then, do both Testaments contain but one continuous plan. For that cannot be otherwise than *one*, of which all the *realities* are the same. And indeed, besides all other thoughts

which may persuade us, that the groundwork and realities of salvation have always been the same; that it is the *manner of appeal* that is changed, and not the *substance of the plan*; this one consideration remains, which should in itself be convincing and conclusive with all who claim the hope of believers now; that, if it were not so, how does the Almighty call himself by the name of the *God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob*, for an *everlasting covenant*? how indeed have the fathers fallen asleep? and what must be the hope of the *most* believing and obedient Israelites? of whom not any could see “life” through their own law alone; and to whom therefore, in this melancholy case, a special revelation were but a worse mockery of their infirmity!

And yet, while the *agreement* is thus great between the two dispensations, the *difference* is so great also, that much in the same way as our Saviour’s commandment just referred to was both *old* and *new*; so may these, which are but *one* in substance, be most naturally and properly accounted, in common apprehension and language, *two*. Wherein, then, is it that they differ?

Much in many ways.—But our present inquiry is limited to the different manner of their appeals to man. See above,
Note E.

In proceeding to consider which point, let

Heber
Lect. VII.

it be borne in mind, that the futility has been most satisfactorily exposed of that cavil against the divine authority of Scripture, by which it is objected, that “the Almighty therein con-
“ descends to *persuade* his creatures to obedience,
“ rather than by a sovereign act compel them to
“ obey^e :” and let the thought which follows be proposed for impartial consideration.

Suppose that *we*, possessed as we undoubtedly are of certain attributes of wisdom and justice, of compassion and benevolence, could set about the work of persuading men to piety and virtue, by an *authority of our own* ; feeling that we really had it in our power to make them adequate amends for their obedience, and means of convincing them to this effect ;—I ask, how should we naturally set about the work, in the first instance ? What inducements should we first offer ? Would not our attempt begin with holding out, as encouragements to well-doing, those advantages on which we see the ambition

^e Nor, indeed, is this cavil only futile ; but in one respect it becomes even valuable to the cause which it assails, inasmuch as it recoils upon the objector ; a fresh exemplification, among many, of the manner in which “ extremes meet.” For what can we imagine the proposer of this objection to think of an “ implicit faith” in Revelation ? And yet in this his objection, we find him actually complaining of the absence of a compulsory force, which must have made all belief merely mechanical ! Such is the inconsistency of error.

and desire of man to be most keenly set? those rewards, of which we may perceive all to be so covetous ;—ascertainable, measurable rewards^f?

I apprehend, that an answer to such question is provided, in an appeal to the character and sanctions of all human laws: wherein that to which alone their power can reach (namely, *punishment*) is strictly of this *visible* sort. From whence no room was left for doubt, of what nature any enactments of such laws would be for the *encouragement* of virtue, were it as much in the power of limited means to *recompense*, as it is to *punish*. But the Almighty, it should seem, has provided us a lesson, in this very feebleness, that he hath in every case reserved the kingdom of recompense to himself alone: See Luke xiv. 14. whether we regard that present vice-royalty of it, which is found in the testimony of a *good conscience*, or that future reality of glory, to be revealed in his own good time.

^f I mean, of course, consistently in all cases with *moral*ity: our instinct of self-defence would teach us to respect *that*. In fact, moral virtue would be exhibited and enforced as the very and only channel that could lead in each particular case to its own proper and analagous compensation: as may be well explained by a reference to the various moral tales of a very popular writer of the day, Miss Edgeworth; all the *encouragements* of whose stories appear to be founded on this very principle, and whose judgment, as a *moral* writer alone, is on many accounts entitled to respectful attention.

If then we are making a right estimate of the manner in which human providence would set about convincing mankind, and establishing them in virtue and goodness of living; let it serve to shew us, how indulgently the dispensations of Omnipotence appear to have proceeded with the creatures of its two peculiar covenants, *agrecably to this natural expectation of our own human reason*. I speak this with reverence. God forbid that it should be thought to compromise or to degrade the ineffable and incomprehensible majesty of the divine perfections! But if we, who now live in the light, can here or elsewhere trace, without impiety, a *condescension*, asking for our love, and stooping for our happiness; what an argument is it for Christian submission, upon the principle of "love to God!" what a motive for yielding cheerfully and wholly to Him, who hath bountifully left us so much for our own, that which alone he claims as an offering in return, of all that he has lent us; namely, "a simple and single surrender of the "heart;" and a sacrifice of the *perverseness* only, not of the *real freedom*, of the will!

I enter not into the question of a *partial* revelation. It is sufficient for the present purpose to perceive, that when it *did* please the Almighty to confine his presence and the true knowledge of himself to one especial people, he *then* graciously ordered his dealings with that

people after a method, of which, though the ordinances were strict, and cumbrous, and multiplied, yet the *manner* was *familiar* and *natural*. Temporal blessings and temporal curses; a land flowing with milk and honey; fruitful seasons; Joshua v. 6. Exod. xxiii. 25, 26, &c. prolific herds; exemption from sickness; bread to the full; and security in their possessions;—are not these, and the like things with these, (accompanied by a denunciation of their opposites, in case of disobedience and rebellion,) the things which we should first of all pronounce most likely, by our intuitive judgment, at once to reconcile the persons to whom they were offered to a strict yoke of positive institutions, and to secure them in moral obedience?

Let the question be referred to the analogy implied in the text. *The law*, says the Apostle, *was our schoolmaster*; and therefore had to do with *children*. Do its conditions, then, appear to have been significantly proportioned and adapted to the natures with which it had to do? I fear it must be admitted to be at least the general nature of children, to be influenced only by *present* motives. With them, the *immediate* gift of a mere bauble will outweigh the most impressive assurance of reward, ten times as great, at a *remote* period. Nor will the power of any pure *moral* satisfaction (such, for example, as the consciousness of a parent's approbation) be often found of equal effect with immediate tangible

indulgence. Such appeals must be reserved for the maturer period, when the *child*, grown up to the intelligence and advanced to the title of a *son*, becomes a fit depositary of the *spirit* of his father's counsels; capable of apprehending the *grounds* and *reasons* of that obedience, in the *exercise* of which he was before retained by inferior motives. But I forbear to dwell upon this topic; since to apply it would only be to weaken, Gal. iv. 1—
7. by transplanting, the very reasoning of St. Paul himself. To return therefore to our own purpose.

Such, as has been represented, we conceive to be the *manner* of appeal made *under the Law*. That, however, while it was so made, through the influence of temporal encouragements and present rewards, a real and enduring REST was prepared in heaven for the faithful, appears most sure. That many of the Fathers, and of the Jews, both before and after the delivery of the Mosaic revelation, *had respect unto* this eternal *recompense*, and lived by faith in it, is most sure also ^g.

But however this may have been, and to whatever extent the hope of everlasting life may then

^g See the express argument of Hebrews, chap. iv. v. and chap. xi. and, by way of comment, several of Bishop Bull's Sermons; with whom it seems to have been a favourite subject: also a Sermon of Jones of Nayland, entitled, "Eternal Life the great Promise of the Law."

have been entertained, or at what period and from whencesoever the error of the *Sadducees* may have arisen; I cannot but think it is to be maintained, as well from the whole general scope of teaching under the Law and the Prophets, as from what the Gospel has subsequently shown to have been the necessity of the case; that the full doctrine of the *resurrection* had no place among mankind, as a sure and *authoritative argument of persuasion* unto holy living, before the *first-fruits* of the great harvest, that shall be, had risen from the dead, in the person of our Saviour. Lect. vi. §. 1.

While we now believe, and are assured, that a permanent existence is, and always has been intended as man's final destiny, we perceive, at the same time, how the knowledge of this great truth has been revealed only gradually, and not developed in its full practical power, until it had first seemed good to the Divine Wisdom to prepare reasonable creatures, through other means, for a full perception of its value, as a motive to true holiness. It seems to have been, throughout, the method of the Deity, to offer persuasions to his thinking creatures "by little and little:" in no case ever withholding that which was sufficient, according to the proportion expected in return; but neither exhibiting at any time more than was sufficient, nor exert-

Cf. Eccus.
xv. 14—20.

ing a power subversive of the essential freedom of man's choice between good and evil.

Thus, under the Mosaic covenant, he tried man *first* in his *more mixed* or *sensitive* nature: or, to speak more simply, in that expression of the Apostle before referred to, (for I would not rashly intermeddle with metaphysical distinctions and niceties,) that trial came the first, which was "*natural*." The *fulness of time* was not yet come, when a further trial might be made, with *all things ready* for its probable success. An appeal directed wholly to the better part, to the *spirit* of man; to motives, and hopes, and faculties of a character altogether *spiritual*, refined, and unseen; appears to have been reserved, until the *ministration of death* and condemnation, *put to proof*, and *found wanting*, might itself stand forth, in its wreck and insufficiency, an additional and most convincing argument, that to *live by sight* is not the way to conquer the perverse will, nor to bring the heart of man unto that *extent* of obedience and of purity, of which, even in this present life, God is pleased to make it capable.

When the history of the Jews, then, had thus worked its prefatory way; when all the inducements, which we should most naturally think would lead to steadfast obedience, had been offered ineffectually; when, *while the meat was yet in their*

Ps. lxxviii.
30—32.

*mou*ths, the fathers *sinned still*; when the single-edged sword of temporal visitation fell blunted from hearts of stone; then came the DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT, for keener and more exclusive trial of the *soul*.

The appeal was now made to man, as a spiritual and immortal being; the armour was flung aside, with which he that called himself the servant of the true God had been furnished before; and that armour put on, which is described by St. Paul in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, and characterized as the *whole armour of God*: the allurements of present recompense, in such sense as it had been employed before, was over. *We* look no longer for an earthly rest; for it has been made sure, that this is not our rest. While we trust still, (as we think it is so often permitted to us through the bounty of our heavenly Father to perceive,) that there is both a positive and tangible, as well as a moral sense, in which godliness has the promise of both worlds; we no longer *lay our account* by temporal enjoyment, but are prepared, if it be God's will, to encounter, in its stead, afflictions, or present burdens. We expect no visible interference of Almighty power to direct and strengthen us: it is enough to know, that he hath promised, and will surely give, to them that ask it faithfully, the secret and illuminating influence of the Spirit, to sanctify their hearts.

Eph. vi.
11—17.

1 Tim. iv. 8.

For *that which is natural* has passed away ; and *that which is spiritual* is now come, and belongs to us and to our children for ever.

Agreeably to this view of the respective characters of the two dispensations, we interpret the *conduct* of them, in respect of *means* and external particulars. We see the earlier one distinguished by many splendid outward manifestations, (as the holy garments of Aaron were *for glory and for beauty*;) by visible symbols of the divine presence ; by means of guidance and protection held forth to the very eyesight of the subjects whom it called to obey. But only a temporary *end* was fully declared ; the real and enduring end was hidden, as it were, behind a veil.

Exodus
xxviii. 2.

Under the Gospel, this order is reversed. Infinitely surpassing as the *glory* of the latter revelation is beyond that of the former, yet it is greater only by a *spiritual* greatness^h. Our business, however, is not to *compare*, but to *unite* the two: that, looking at both thoughtfully together, we may rejoice the rather in perceiving how either covenant was best adapted to the season in which it was revealed ; and in ascertaining, from such thought, more fully, and then pondering more devoutly, *wherein surely lies the*

^h As may be illustrated by the proportions of the former and the latter temples. Compare Ezra iii. 12. with Haggai ii. 9.

trial unto which we ourselves are called; and what responsibility belongs to us, for the use we may make of that fulness of light, which is vouchsafed in the complete knowledge of *both* dispensations.

Thus, then, (if our view be justified by sound reason, and not forbidden by Scripture,) the comparison appears to stand in a sort of reciprocated position. "The Law" had its *end, veiled*; its *means* of appeal, *outward and visible*: "the Gospel" has its *means, tacit and inward*; but its *end, fully revealed*.

Correspondent, we think, to this view which has been taken, have been, and are, the appearances of the moral world.

The subjects of either dispensation have been found (would that so many of the latter were not still found!) overtaken and seduced by apostasies, analogous to the quality and bearing of their respective trials. The apostasy of the Jews became IDOLATRY; a gross, palpable crime: the apostasy of modern times appears to be a SPIRITUAL and INTELLECTUAL REJECTION of the Deity; either wholly, or at least in part, as now predicated in his mysterious essence. A portentous form of infidelity! resulting from the abuse of "liberty" into "licentiousness;" from the pruriency of that more subtle part of the constitution of human nature, to which the Gospel addresses its appeal, uninfluenced and un-

restrained by that fundamental submission of the will, which it inculcates and insists upon.

Nor is it, I think, fairly to be objected here, that "idolatry," even in a practical shape, has been exhibited under the Christian covenant.

It seems not, in very strictness, true, so to affirm. For those later outrages of atheism and blasphemy, which may here suggest themselves to recollection, partake more of the nature of exception than of general ruleⁱ. And think as we may concerning such offences as the "image-worship," and other connected errors, into which some Christians have been betrayed; or true as it is, in regard of its effect hereafter to the beguiled soul, that he, who loves the perishable treasures of this life more than the hope of life eternal, makes his worldly prosperity his "God;" yet there is not, in either of these two cases, that *intentional and conscious dereliction* of the true God for another;—for a stock, or a stone, or a molten image;—which appears to constitute the crime of "idolatry," in its more strict and primitive import; and which I cannot but conceive, from simple and unbiassed impression, to have been the *full* offence, under the elder covenant. The application of the term to *covetousness*, is obviously made in a sense altogether spiritual, and is therefore confirmative,

See Jerem.
ii. 10, 11.
Ezek. xx.
32.

ⁱ The excesses of the French Revolution are here alluded to.

rather, of our proposition, than at variance with it. And the offence of "image-worship" will, I think, (when impartially considered,) be admitted to be an error, more nearly allied to *superstition*, than to any general *mistrust* of the Almighty. Nor does it appear to be expressly characterized by our Church as more than "a Article xxii. fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God." I would not willingly be thought an apologist of error: but there is quite enough of real deformity in the one now before us, to render exaggeration of it unnecessary.

There are other points which might be dwelt upon, in fuller explanation of our general view.

For example: the error of modern times *within* the pale of faith is a *spiritual* error, as well as that *without*; I mean, "enthusiasm^k." So clearly is this such, that we are continually suffering our jealousy and fear of it to keep our tempers back from that spirituality, to which belongs the kingdom of heaven:—a spirituality, which cannot, indeed, with truth be said to be an *opposite* to "enthusiasm;" yet which is as far removed from it as any other excellence is removed from its lesser and kindred extreme; or the *use* of a blessing from the *abuse* of it.

^k As the word is popularly employed to designate fanatical excess in religion, not in its philosophical sense.

Again : we might contemplate, in the same light, the aspects of the world (where revelation has been vouchsafed) in respect of *improvement*, as well as of apostasy. There might be traced in these, I think, exactly that sort of change, which is in proportion and in harmony with the existing dispensation : no violent convulsion, or total unlikeness of latter times to former : but a change, general and indefinite in its operation, rather than specific and measurable ; a tacit, yet most influential, progress of refinement, not eradicating evil, but at once subliming virtue, and softening crime. But to this, the dawn of which seems perceptible almost as soon as ever we enter on the New Testament, we shall have occasion to refer again.

Lect. v.
part 2.

We might refer also (which will serve beautifully to explain, as it appears to have been a preparation for, this change) to that which may be very intelligibly represented as the *twilight* of the earlier dispensation. We might observe how the “old” seems gradually to have been modified, until it might *melt into* the “new ;” the “new” to have taken an aspect scarcely its own, as it were, in the beginning, to engraft itself upon the “old.” Witness, on the one hand, the remarkable cessation of idolatry amongst the Jews, subsequently to the captivity of Babylon ; and the increasing expectation of a future state among them, as the advent of the great Deliverer

drew nearer and nearer. On the other, advert to the Baptist's intermediate ministry; to the palpably miraculous beginnings of Christianity, and its various reverence for established things—for existing customs and institutions. The appearance of *consistency* prevailing through all these several processes and preparative accommodations is something far too subtle for any compass of imposture, which could (by any possibility) have been devised by the first *human* authors of the Gospel. If we consider them as the connecting links between a *natural* dispensation and a *spiritual*, proceeding from the same divine mind; there is then to be perceived, in all, an exquisite and most appropriate grace of uniformity.

But enough has been said to explain that which it has been our purpose to represent; and it is expedient to bring the subject to a conclusion.

Such, then, is that general view of the agreement and difference between the Old and New Testaments, for the description of which we have borrowed (diverting it from its original application) the Apostle's language; *howbeit, that was not first, which is spiritual, but that which was natural; and afterward that which is spiritual*; and which appears so eminently capable of being entertained with advantage, towards a dutiful and submissive reception of the Gospel, as

the rule and law of life. Certain consequences, from hence resulting, which I am anxious to point out as worthy of attention, must be reserved for another Lecture.

Let it be permitted, at present, briefly to recapitulate these inferences:—how such view goes to invest the Gospel with the character and weight of a *final* dispensation, from which there is no appeal;—how it implies, that in order to receive it effectually, we must receive it in that *inner man*, to which it is so pointedly offered;—how manifestly it requires of us, that we rise superior to the grossness of mere *sensible* things; as things whose value has been ascertained and fixed by positive experiment, and which are now to be regarded as belonging only to a *step gone by* in the order of Providence;—how it warns

2 Cor. v. 7. us, by consequence, to live henceforth *by faith, and not by sight*, for the *life of sight is over*;

Cf. Lect. iv. watching the wanderings of the *intellectual* will, part 1. as well as of the *moral*, lest it should tempt us to strive against our Maker; being aware, that God hath placed therein a very main portion of our danger; and that while he has promised us the sure help of an omnipotent grace, if we are but willing to receive it, he has left it *quite open* to a diseased nature to *refuse* the means of health;—lastly, how it awakens us to ponder, very thoughtfully and very honestly, whether even mere reason should not persuade us to per-

ceive and to acknowledge this; namely, that if no one submission of our natural will or private judgment be demanded of us by *religion*; then not only was the “dispensation of the Spirit,” and the revelation of Jesus Christ, unnecessary; but *all* revelation was, and is, unnecessary; nay, the existence of one only wise and supreme Governor of all things is unnecessary: for man, thus unbelieving, insubordinate, and independent, is, as it were, a God unto himself!

Now unto that true and only God, who of his infinite mercy hath called *us* out of such gross darkness as this into his marvellous light, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all honour, and praise, and glory, now and for ever.

LECTURE III.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

WE paused, in the last Lecture, at a point of comparison between the Mosaic and Evangelical dispensations, in contemplation of which it was suggested, that the prevalent apostasy under the later and more spiritual covenant, was an apostasy of that nature which might have been expected from analogy. It was represented (in contradistinction to the grosser sin of idolatry among the Jews) to be a more “spiritual and “intellectual rejection of the Deity;” either wholly, or else in respect of his mysterious essence, as now revealed through the Gospel: which, of course, includes a rejection, to a corresponding extent, in either case, of his existing special revelation.

We now proceed to consider certain deductions from the view thus taken of Christianity, as the “dispensation of the Spirit,” which were alluded to in the opening Lecture. And let the first be thus stated.

I. That “by thus habitually contemplating
 “ the Gospel, we shall come to perceive, through
 “ our own very reason, the absolute necessity of
 “ FAITH, as a primary and distinct practical prin-
 “ ciple in man; and of an inward spiritual as-
 “ sistance of divine grace to direct us unto ac-
 “ ceptable obedience.”

For we affirm, that the Gospel now makes its appeal to us as spiritual beings; that is to say, as beings, of a capacity and a destiny, beyond and superior to the things, even the very best things, which we now see, and amongst which we live; as beings that have really and assuredly souls that shall live for ever; and a destiny, by which, if we will fitly cherish these souls, and prepare them by a certain course of discipline, only for a season, we shall, as surely, be admitted in due time into the fulness of all knowledge, and shall even *see God as he is*.

¹ John iii.
².

Suspend, then, the thought of revelation for a moment; and consider whether or no these of its propositions that follow, correspond with positive experience.

Is it, then, or is it not, a matter of positive experience, (by which I mean, here, an existing *reality*, immediately perceptible, and to be judged of by ourselves, independently of all testimony,) that we have *souls*? At least, that we have a principle within us, of which we know not the full account, nor how it is united with the body;

but of which we *do* know, and may continually feel, that it is the power which moves us to think, and meditate, and understand; of which we may know, that it is curious and restless; and that it is susceptible of pain or pleasure, unconnected with the body, at least so far as that it can rejoice, when the body is in suffering; or be grieved, when that is revelling in every apparent outward comfort. Is this, or is it not, a matter of positive experience; perceptible, and to be judged of, by ourselves?

Again: is it not matter of experience also, (though of another kind, and dependent upon other testimony,) that the nature of this lively and incorporeal principle has, of old, been the most interesting subject of their highest knowledge and inquiry, to men of the loftiest views, and most enlarged measures of unassisted human reason? and that, after all balancing of doubts and difficulties, the wisest among these have come to the conclusion, (*conjectural*, indeed, but still *their conclusion*,) that it is an *immortal* principle, having its *home* elsewhere than in the body, where it is only a lodger for a season? And has not an accompanying object of the same spirit of research been, to ascertain the "first Great Cause," and the constitution of all things? in fact, (under whatever title,) to comprehend the arrangements and perfections of the Deity?

That such inquiries have failed, (as “reason” must surely be pronounced still likely to fail in them, seeking in its own strength alone,) does not concern our present question. What concerns this, is simply the fact of their having existed; of their having sprung naturally, as it were, out of the disposition of man.

When Scripture, therefore, comes, and positively reveals to us, that these aspirations and conjectures, as far as they can go, are right and true; that we *are* the citizens of another state; that our *home* is distant and invisible; that we shall hereafter know all things, whatever we desire to know;—does it call us to the belief of strange or unreasonable things?

Surely, in regard to these main points themselves, it must be admitted, that it does not!

Neither does it, (I venture to advance a step, and affirm further,) neither does it offer *violence* to our reason, when, in connection with the positive knowledge of these great doctrines, it calls us to belief of others with them, of a kindred character: such as our *hereditary proneness to sin*, and Christ’s *atonement*; our continual *need*, as well of illuminating as of sanctifying *grace*; and the necessity of *watchfulness against unseen, spiritual enemies*.

“Mysterious” such doctrines are, it were unavailing not to acknowledge: yet are they (if the expression be allowable) *rationaly mysterious*.

Heb. xiii.
14. xi. 10,
16.
2 Cor. v. 1.
1 Cor. xiii.
9, 10, 12.
1 John iii.
2.
Cf. Phil. iii.
12.
Rom. viii.
16.

For seeing that the great elementary point itself (namely, “that we are the subjects of an “everlasting destiny, and only travellers and “pilgrims through this present state of existence”) is not only not repugnant to reason, but its very own loftiest conclusion; it appears no longer a disproportionate claim, either upon wisdom or consistency, to ask this further concession; “that travellers should surely be provided with, and know where to look for, “strength and refreshment upon their journey, “sufficient to support them through it; and that “they must derive that strength from the repository, where is really their *home*.”

It is from “home” we take our means of provision, when we enter on an earthly journey. And the chapter from whence the text is taken seems abundantly to justify the spirit of the analogy,—that so must our supply be sought from a like quarter, for the way wherein *we walk by faith, and not by sight*.

Now, we think, that he who has placed the souls of those whom he hath called unto belief, in this present life, as in a scene of trial, hath vouchsafed unto them a certain knowledge of mysterious and transcendent things, as their proper sustenance and consolation. Is *this* unreasonable, on the one part? On the other, is it any more unreasonable, that mysterious and transcendent things should require corresponding ca-

pacities and strength to apprehend them? We behold, then, in the DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT, the necessity of FAITH displayed, as a result of the deepest and best researches of pure reason; and learn at once, together with our faith, to acknowledge the indispensable necessity of PRAYER, and of a simple dependence upon the AID OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, as that which alone can continue with us, as a sure defence, in all our temptations^a.

II. But let us proceed to a second consequence of this same view of revealed truth; viz. “that it will assist us to reconcile to ourselves
“ (with a resigned, though melancholy, comprehension) the afflicting sight which is so continually presented to us in either of two ways:
“ first, by the *practically unbelieving*; the disobedient and rebellious, whom we still see de-

^a By parity of reason, we shall hereby learn also to admit, upon a broad ground of rational conviction, that which we can never account for in detail, and which still appears a stumbling-block of so great offence to many; the *reality*, and literal construction of what the New Testament so clearly teaches concerning the *devil*, and our spiritual enemies. To *allegorize* whatever we do not understand, is a method, which, as far as concerns the *theory* of our religion, will silence no objector, and only deceive ourselves: as far as relates to its spirit and *practice*, surely it is most unwise, by doubting the personal reality of an enemy, whose *effects*, at least, (as attributed in the same record which describes himself,) we *feel* to be *real*, to cast away the only sword and shield with which we may prevail against him.

“voted to the world, and sense, and all perish-
 “able things, in the midst of a spiritual and
 “holy dispensation; and again by those, whom
 “our present topic more concerns, and whose
 “case is even yet more painful,—by more subtle
 “and *intellectual unbelievers*, or, as we fear, *dan-*
 “*gerous perverters* of Scripture, whom we be-
 “hold *morally good*; perhaps, in some cases, al-
 “most like the young man in the Gospel,
 “(though in another sense,) wanting ‘only one
 “thing’ to make them perfect partakers of the
 “kingdom of heaven.” It will enable us to bear
 this painful sight, by convincing us inwardly of
 what we must be prepared to know, for our own
 security; namely, the hopelessness of expecting
 to convert, or convince, by merely human means,
 those who will persist in strengthening them-
 selves in the might and pride of the unassisted
 understanding. It is a work not to be done.

See Lect.
 vii. ad init.
 See Luke
 xviii. 18.
 Matth. xix.
 21.

The thought must not come in bitterness, (still
 less, may the word be spoken in hypocrisy;) but
 there is only one safe confession concerning
 such persons; that, somehow or other, *a veil*
 lies yet *upon their hearts*, and though truth is
 around them, and at hand, they cannot see it.
 I do not use this expression undesignedly; but
 with full consciousness that it is a figure which
 “fanaticism” may readily misapply; which,
 doubtless, often already it has misapplied; and
 will often misapply again. I use it, in part, for

Cf. 2 Cor.
 iii. 14—16.
 Cf. Rom. x.
 6, 7, 8. and
 reference
 there to
 Deut. xxx.
 12, 13, 14.

this very reason ; because there is too great a readiness, in many, to abandon scriptural truths in their original and most convincing form of expression, as soon as their language, either from suspected or from too familiar employment, has become offensive to correct taste. Now it is time for us to learn not to be deterred from the use of that which is our safety, by looking fearfully at its abuse only. And the point before us is one, above all others, which calls forth the heart's utmost earnestness ; it is of such delicate and perilous importance !

If it be true, (as we believe it to be,) that the best advocates of the Christian faith have manifested superiority of argument, and learning, and sound conclusion, (in short, of all human wisdom,) in their reasonings with the infidel ; and the infidel continues yet unsubdued ;—it follows, from that one conviction only, that *some power of persuasion not of man*, yet using something which is in man, is the thing required to make the unbeliever bow to the truth of revelation.

But, what is more than this, if any of ourselves do now stand in the true faith of Christ, and hope in reality for the blessings of the life to come ; so many, I am sure, must feel a living witness in their hearts, that it is not by their own strength only that they stand, but by the grace and blessing of God upon a disposition to receive his will. There is no practical meaning

in such a phrase as *the earnest of the Spirit*, if 2 Cor. v. 5. the case be not so.

Wherefore, this continual regarding of ourselves as subjects of the “dispensation of the Spirit” will enable us to comprehend, and to endure dutifully, both of these painful sights; viz. that of practical unholiness in the perverse and ignorant; and that of speculative unbelief in moral dispositions which we cannot but love. It will teach us also, (wherever occasion is,) how to behave towards persons manifesting either of these alienations from the Gospel; namely, that while we must keep fast to our own convictions, as we value our immortal souls; it behoves us, at the same time, to prove the sincerity and power of those convictions, by the fruits they bring forth in us; by patience and forbearance, by meekness and gentleness. We feel ourselves to be within the pale of security and comfort; — it is well: let us give God the glory. But we have neither *power to compel* gainsayers to come in, nor right to *judge them that are without*. Our strength lies in internal confidence, Cf. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. not in outward debate and strife. All are not, in this latter respect, warriors and champions in the Israel of God. Many *cannot go with the armour* of disputation; for they *have not* Cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 39, 40. *proved it*. But *all*, who surely trust in the protection of that God who hath preserved the heritage and flock of their fathers, may wield

1 Pet. iii.
15. ii. 15.

successfully *the sling and the stone* of a simple and charitable conversation. And that which is prescribed to Christians in the aggregate in this matter is; to be ready to *give a reason of the hope that is in themselves, with meekness and fear*; and that *with well-doing they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*.

Cf. Psalms
xxxi. 19,
20. xxxviii.
12, 13, 14,
15.

There is no promise that confirms to believers any universal intellectual superiority^b. The shrewdness of reasoning in an infidel antagonist may surpass that of many a true Christian. And, therefore, as far as we possess the weaker cause in *this* respect; that we may feel ourselves unequal to *literal* discussions of truths which are to be defended more by the heart than by the tongue, and to be silent by constraint is always accounted, more or less, a sign of weakness; so far we must be content to bear the shame, if shame it be! No keener intellect was ever yet persuaded merely by arguments which it thinks weaker in degree than its own; nor was any cavil ever silenced by peremptory and uncha-

^b I mean, in respect of *argumentation*, or of any matters confessedly within the reach of unassisted human powers. We believe it to be the *fact*, (as just now observed,) that the *best* Christian advocates have gained even the *human* victory over their antagonists. But this is another question. Taking the *mass* of believers and unbelievers, it is probable that no great difference of general powers is to be found on either side. See hereafter, Lectures IV. and V; towards the end of each.

ritable condemnation, or without some proof that the voice of authority, which ventured to denounce it, proceeded out of a heart at least sincere, *and reasonably enlightened*. But almost every nature is susceptible of personal candour and kindness. These therefore, which are due to all men, let us render unto all; but if, by divine blessing, we ourselves are stedfast in the hope of a peculiar prize and calling, let us keep our *faith*, as best we may; and never be ensnared rashly to handle it, otherwise than according to the accompanying gifts which God has given us.

III. A third effect of thus regarding ourselves as the children of a more advanced and perfect stage of one continuous revelation will be found, “in the disposition which it will produce towards the treatment and apprehension of the *whole* word of God, in *both* of its great divisions.”

The very circumstance (if there were no other causes operating to the same effect) of its being a popular and prevailing practice among Christians, to separate the one volume of the Bible from the other, and (what is in a certain sense and measure undoubtedly right) frequently to consider the latter portion, the New Testament, all that is either necessary, or proper, to be regarded by more simple and uneducated brethren; this single circumstance has in itself

a tendency, more or less direct, to depreciate the volume of the Old.

Now the view under contemplation will beget a worthy and devout reverence for the volume of the Old Testament, on the surest and safest grounds: not merely as an invaluable record of primitive antiquity; not as the most ancient book in all the world; not as that which was *once* a revelation of the Almighty, and a law to his chosen people, but is now such no more:—*these* are honourable, but not adequate characteristics of it:—not therefore, as any of these; but as that which, being in itself the *word of GOD*, and now illustrated in all its purposes, and bearings, and sanctions, by the superior brightness of the Gospel, is *light* and *spirit* still:—as a book, of which all the portions that unfold the counsels and the attributes of the Most High, and the services he permanently expects from his moral creatures, now subjected to the pure control of Christian principles, are become (as it were) Gospel to ourselves. Of which, even the parts that *have perished with the using*—the local ceremonies and carnal ordinances,—even these claim a tribute, not other than of reverent thankfulness, when we reflect, that there is a sense in which it may be said of *them*, as it is said of Him who was the real substance of them all, that they now appear (in part) to have been thus ordained, *that we through their poverty*

Cf. Lect. iv.
ad init. and
Lect. v.
II. §. 3.
Lect. vi.
I. §. i.

Coloss. ii.
22.

2 Cor. viii.
9.

might, in due season, become rich^c. Again, as a book, all whose memorials of another kind are entitled to a very different reception from that which unbelief, or too nice taste, or levity, sometimes bestows upon them; I mean such memorials as record the rude practices of nations differing from our own in time and knowledge, in climate and customs; or the grosser (and as we think now, repulsive) permissions therein contained; in respect of “polygamy,” (for instance) or the union of near kindred, and such things; or again, the crimes and palpable offences which disgrace many of the individual characters, even of God’s chosen family and people:—there are not any of these things which may not be turned to profit, when digested properly; that is to say, by the humble thoughtfulness of a believing spirit, bearing in remembrance, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime were* Romans xv. 4. *written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope:* provided only we have once learnt to distinguish between what they really do teach, and what they do not; to understand, by help of faith, what things are written for our *imitation*, and what for our *admonition*. But to dwell on this point here would be to anticipate too

^c I mean “poverty” so understood, as was explained in the preceding Lecture, comparing the Law and the Gospel, p. 44.

Lecture iv. much of the subject of another Lecture: wherefore at present we will pass on to a

IV. General consideration resulting from the view here taken of holy Scripture.

There needs no argument to prove, of what infinite importance it is to ourselves, the subjects of a *spiritual* covenant with the Almighty, and only of a *tacit* appeal made by Him to our more inward faculties, that we should be convinced of the *real agency* of a Divine power in the affairs of men, and of his displeasure against evil-doing: convinced as surely, (if it may be possible,) as if we had seen that agency visibly displayed before our natural eyes.

Bearing this in mind, then, let it be inquired; Does not the view in which we are now contemplating the continuous proceedings of the Deity with man, lead to these thoughts that follow?

That the one same God, and Ruler, and Preserver of all men, (having created man for happiness in the beginning, and having ever since been tenderly anxious to bring him at last into the same, in despite of man's unworthiness,) has progressively revealed the knowledge of himself unto his creatures, that in every manner he might *try* them, if as free, accountable, moral agents, they would hearken to his counsels. And once he tried them (that is, our fathers of the elder covenant) by a dispensation of more

visible “means,” *making a show openly of his title to obedience*: and now he tries them (that is, ourselves, as many as enjoy the Gospel) by a more gentle, yet more perfect trial; by a “dispensation of the Spirit.” Once, he has revealed himself to man, *in positive actual agency and interference* in the concerns of this lower world; has displayed in part (if I may so speak, and be forgiven) the *machinery* of his Providence; and now he has withdrawn that proof of immediate interposition, and is not traced as the Supreme Governor of the world, except through silent and ordinary processes.

Yet can we doubt that he is the same real Ruler now, as ever? Surely we may perceive most reasonably, that the more naked manifestations of the Old Testament seem to have been made *once*, for the *greater universal benefit*: as far as we, individually, are concerned, for the more full instruction of our *own* souls in all necessary knowledge; for the more lively awakening of our fears; for the surer trial of our patience; for the higher test of our belief; for the more resistless subjugation of our pride, and of the perverseness of our natural will.

Cf. Lect. vi.
II. §. 1.

Which if it be so, let us consider how this train of thought and faith, continued, may serve us as a guiding principle, in contemplation of the general moral aspects of the world, as now

influenced and directed by silent and secondary means.

We are satisfied by various evidences coinciding to the same purpose, that “the hand of Providence is still over us in every thing, as certainly and fully now, when it is never openly exhibited, as it was of old, when the arm of might was bared in palpable visitations.” And what shall be the consequence?

Shall it be, that, when we have this great security for our unspeakable comfort, we must needs go hand in hand with an overheated piety, in referring to it with an indiscriminate forwardness, and an unholy familiarity? in appealing to the first Great Cause for interpretation of every ordinary case that happens, not by any appointment specially and perceptibly providential, but only mediately, and in the order of things? in drawing out our whole store, and last resource, on common occasions? in fixing, uncharitably, judgments that cannot stand; and passing sentences which an hour may reverse? or in despairing, indolently, of good things which may yet possibly be accomplished by a larger exertion of Christian faith, and hope, and perseverance?

Not so: but understanding, deeply and habitually, that, while the *doctrine itself is sure for ever*, we have no rule for partial interpretations of it; that the hand of God is *indeed* prevailing

in every event which we behold around us, yet that he speaks, through these, only in a general manner, to our *spirits* and our *consciences*; to our implanted sense of *good* and *evil*, of *right* and *wrong*, purified (as it now is) by revealed knowledge of a *heaven—wherein dwelleth righteousness*, and of a “*grace*,” which we and all Christians must seek, and may obtain, to prepare us for that immortality; we shall rather learn to cast all the present sights which strike or perplex us; all the warnings which awaken our fears, all the preservations which call forth our gratitude, into storehouses of faith, wherein to lay up living principles of *self-examination*, and *improvement of our own hearts*, personally and privately: being (of course) *observant* of all marked events, which we cannot help interpreting as lessons; but neither dwelling on such to the detriment of *charity*, nor rashly proclaiming our inferences from them, whatever they may be; for the mind almost immediately passes from such process into a perilous approbation of itself. Above all things, never referring to any *individual’s final* portion, but drawing *general conclusions*, as to the “*sure effects of obedience, or disobedience*,” “*of belief, or unbelief*,” “*of practical religion, or the want of it*,” according to what the Scriptures of divine truth have declared concerning such dispositions at all times, and under every

² Pet. iii.
13.

Cf. Ps. iv.
⁴.

Cf. Ps.
lviii. 10,
11.
Cf. Luke
xiii. 1, 5.

dispensation, from the very beginning: by consequence, learning and resolving to cleave to that which is holy, and just, and good, for our own portion individually; to uphold that which is good, with all the authority of our respective stations; to recommend that which is good to others, by the light of personal example: that so, they who will not listen to the words, may be brought to reverence the works of the Spirit;

Matt. v. 16. and led at last to *glorify our Father which is in heaven.*

I am anxious to awaken reflection to this point particularly, because there appear to be found among us two very opposite tempers, generated by the prevalence of evil in the world, both very dangerous.

The one is a temper, (the more dangerous, if found united, as it sometimes is, with a stronger piety,) which if too much listened to would tend ultimately to destroy “the essential love of “right” that is in man, and “detestation of “wrong;” and to superinduce a species of “fatalism.” It is to be traced, in a too eager readiness to look upon prevailing evil in the light of an impediment, which, because we ourselves can certainly neither see nor expect its *end*, is hardly to be considered as surmountable; but almost as a subject of despair. From which subjection to the power of “wrong,” merely by reason of its immensity, or seeming per-

manency, the descent may often prove only a single step to the toleration of abstract evil by deliberate choice; either as a thing in which we *must* acquiesce, and shall therefore do wisely to become reconciled to; or (in some particular cases) as a burden even *preferable* to certain other possible conditions, upon a balance of expediency^d.

Now we admit the existence and the prevalence of much and monstrous wickedness; we observe its progress with grief; we expect its consequences with fear and trembling. It does

^d I cannot forbear adverting (in illustration of this last position) to that most inconsistent favour shown towards BUONAPARTE, by many pious people; arising, I suppose, from calculation with themselves, that the dominion even of such a man were a less evil than the restoration of *Popery*. Possibly, meditation upon the deeper parts of Scripture may have become the cause of this preference, by pointing to the tyrant as an instrument likely to fulfil yet unaccomplished prophecies. But if so, then, surely, speculations of that sort are highly dangerous. For all *fulfilled* Scripture, all the light of conscience within us, all the experience of past ages, concur, in persuading us to abhorrence and resistance of such a monster, at the hazard of any consequences. The voice of God, I am persuaded, is clear on *this* point; be the intentions of unsearchable Providence concerning that man really what they may. But it is far from clear, that we are justified in so interpreting *the deep things of the Spirit* yet to befall, as to let them obliterate all convictions generated by the past for our moral preservation. Such convictions, too, are *common property*; which no person, holding only a *joint share*, has a *right* thus to adventure.

Matt. xxiv.
12.

not come upon us unprepared. Our Saviour has forewarned us of it, and of its present calamitous effects; *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* We cannot even hope, therefore, to witness its suppression; and yet we must contend against it, and contend perseveringly! Strange seeming contrariety! and yet perfect consistent truth! in itself a sufficient and conclusive argument, that the moral certainty, however great, of an *end* which rests in *other* hands, does not dispense with the diligent employment of such righteous *means*, conducive to it, as are entrusted to our *own*.

But here the second dangerous temper, just now mentioned, presents itself to view,—in the impatience of a self-complacent “philosophy,” which, because religion does not operate to the extinction of evil, with a speed and power answerable to its own estimate of necessary and possible reform, rejects the divine counsel in this matter altogether, and, passing it by, springs forward, in its own strength, to the amendment of the world at once. As though it actually saw, and could measure both the source and the extent of evil, more surely than Scripture; and could bring a better hope to the desire of subduing it.

Now clearly there is a mistake here, either on the one side or the other. And we think it is

on the side of the philosopher, and not of the believer, for such reasons as these.

Christian faith certainly desires, nay, demands the "perfection" of man, as much as the most sanguine philosophy can do. Religion sees and laments the domination of wrong, as keenly as the purest reason can. It is true, that "reason" and "religion," "philosophy" and "faith," presently part company, when a closer analysis of "evil" begins, in order to ascertain the means of cure. And we may admit, that the extent of immediate visible relief anticipated by the theorist, is greater than any upon which the believer presumes to reckon with peremptory confidence^c.

Which if it be so, it may perhaps be objected, —that then, surely, the philosopher appears to have this manifest and great advantage; that as he sets to work under a brighter hope, he will proceed with a more lively courage; since he himself considers his desire possible, his energies will be the more persevering, in proportion as his prospect of success is greater and nobler. Whereas the Christian, being sure beforehand that his success will not be more than partial, will be likely soon to retreat into his reserved

^c This was written before the "Plan" proposed by Mr. Owen was brought before the public. That plan, and the previous publications of Mr. Owen, may serve to illustrate the observations here made.

hold of impossibility, and cease from his endeavour.

I answer, no : the very reverse of this appears the true case. It is the believer who is most likely to persevere ; and the philosopher that will most commonly falter.

For to the eye of faith it is clear as demonstration, that the theorist, starting in the outset on deficient principles, pursues an end which actually *is* unattainable, whether he think it so or not. As it has been said, however, he himself thinks otherwise of it. The sun shines upon the morning of his journey, and he sets to work in cheerfulness. I will not say, that he *may* not work until his life's evening. There is a cold and watery sun, that shines through many a day with the appearance of splendour, when the earth is little heated with its beams, and nature little invigorated. When we look for the real growth it has produced, there is none ; for its heat was not a vital one. So may it fare with the philosopher, in plans of *human perfectibility without religion*. The splendour of "talent" may cheer him on his way ; partial success in private instances, or even general (apparent) success, under the first impulses of novelty, may encourage and assure him ; and the deceptive glare of a posthumous celebrity may shed a lustre on his dying hour. I do not say, but that all this is possible : though even this is only

possible in the rarer instances of *really powerful* native minds amongst unbelievers. But disappointed vanity would benumb the efforts of a far greater proportion : for supposing their perseverance to relax upon discouragement, and they incline to leave the world after all such as they found it, what shall hinder them ? They are answerable at no tribunal ; they have no account to give. Is not *this* likely to be the end of the matter ; to conclude, that “ they offered “ the world a boon, and the world would not “ accept it ; they would have rejoiced to labour “ more, but the world was not worthy ? ”

The believer enters on his task under very different auspices. He does not look, positively, for any visible issue to his labours here ; it is not that, to which it is his duty to look. He *casts* Eccles. xi. 1. *his bread upon the waters* only in the *sure* hope of *seeing it again after many days*. It may be in the mercy of God, that he shall find it in *this* life as well ; but he *reckons upon it* only in *another*. He does not look towards the visible sum of other people’s account ; but to that which serves towards the positive increase, the required amount of his own. His appointed work is—to *work out his own salvation* ; and he Philip. ii. 12. *may* attain *this* object in full.

But the way of this lies (in its practical part) through the very employment of advancing the happiness of his fellow-creatures. On this, there- Cf. Lect. viii.

fore, his attention will always be set ; to this object he will be pressing forward. Not by looking to any extravagant picture he may have fancied to himself of an universal reformation ; but by *making sure* of contributing *his own share* towards an event, which he is satisfied to leave in the hands of Omniscience. He will be *always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord.*

1 Cor. xv.
58.

This is the believer's prospect. I do not say he is not subject to weariness, to vacillations of the spirit, to disappointments, to wretchedness, like other men. But he knows that he is destined to be *tried* every way ; and therefore, perhaps, more keenly in this way than in any other. What, however, is it really to him, when all comes to all, though his labours should not exhibit on the surface *any* present fruit ? Has he therefore in himself no hope ? Rather is the Prophet's confidence then *his*, in unexhausted consolation ; *Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; —yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Habak. iii.
17, 18.

Such are some important deductions resulting from the previous view here taken of God's two great dispensations, which appear worthy of grave attention ; the connection of which with the main purpose of the subsequent inquiry

will appear, incidentally, throughout. A disposition being thus prepared for receiving it with thoughtfulness, the next Lecture will proceed to assert "the *general* correspondence of the Bible " with the aspects of human nature."

LECTURE IV.

JOHN ii. 25.

For he knew what was in man.

THESE are words spoken of our Saviour, during his abode on earth : but they are true also of that holy record ^a whereby he is made known to us, now that the day of his Gospel is far spent, and the Comforter has long been reigning in his stead. In prosecution, therefore, of our subject, I propose to apply them, generally, to “ Holy Scripture ;” and to seek an argument of its “ divine authority” from the consideration, that it *knew what was in man*.

At the crisis at which we contemplate the believer now, it signifies but little by what portal he has entered in to the temple of truth. We contemplate him, as having made the simple surrender of his own will to that of God ; and, therefore, whether mercy brought him thither

^a Thus Scripture is personified and identified with its Author by St. Paul, Galatians iii. 8. Προϊδῶσα δὲ ἡ γραφὴ &c. And again, *ibid.* ver. 22. Ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τὰ πάντα, &c.

Psal. xlviii.
12, 13.

by the shorter path of intuitive assent, or whether he has entered in after having first *gone round about the towers of Zion, and numbered all the bulwarks thereof*, need no longer be matter of anxiety. He has arrived now, in either case, at a condition, which may be compared to that of the disciples, Peter and James and John, after our Lord's transfiguration; when the glory had vanished, and the voice of celestial proclamation ceased; and looking round, *they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.*

Matt. xvii.
9.

Mark. ix. 8.

So fares it with the Christian—left in company with the Scripture only and his own faith and conscience, in this world. And when in this posture of things he shall look around, what shall he expect—what is he entitled to expect—(in regard to internal qualification,) in that which he has thus chosen for a guide and lasting companion?

I do not mean in this Lecture to speak more than *generally*.

Generally, then, he may with reason expect to find in an authentic record, purporting to be the full and final disclosure of the Divine will towards reasonable creatures; the abiding treaty between heaven and earth; the delegated voice of God, summoning believers to happiness, and alone able to conduct them to it; such correspondence with the existing state of his own positive experience, and so much, at least, of

appeal to faculties with which he finds himself endowed, as may leave him no room to doubt, that *he and such as he are the persons to whom the record is addressed.*

Does Scripture meet this expectation? We think it does.

It may help us in our search, and will present the question in an interesting point of view, to consider what sort of a *material* volume the Book of Inspiration is.

It is a volume, then, such as a child may carry in his hand; and even of this small substance a large portion is taken up with "History;" a good deal by the provisions of a "Ceremonial Law," now abrogated; a large share, again, by "Prophecy;" and a good deal also by "controversial reasoning," mixed up with the exhortations of the Apostolical Epistles. There remains, of *positive law*, and matter *directly preceptive*, a sum extraordinarily small: and yet the volume is adequate (in the believer's apprehension) to meet all the contingent variety of cases which may arise in human actions.

Now if this be so, if Scripture be indeed found such a sure and comprehensive guide, we contend for *this* inference; that it never could have been within the grasp of any mind, such as we have seen and known men like ourselves to bear, so to enclose all the licentiousness of man's practice within the fence of so very narrow

a prescription. It is the character of human legislation to *multiply* statutes and prohibitions: which indeed (when we come to reflect upon the matter) appears to be of necessity the character of a legislation that is in fact *retrospective*; whose ordinances are built upon “experience” only; and whose fulness and accuracy must depend upon the sum of knowledge in the legislators, at the period of enacting their statutes. The ordinances of the divine mind are of a very different character; founded on a thorough previous acquaintance with the very secrets of all hearts, which ever have been, are, or are to come. They are simple and *prospective*: their foundation is not “experience,” but something antecedent to experience; a full, perfect, and unerring insight into all the possibilities of nature. Human statutes, therefore, may be multiplied almost to infinity, and yet be very imperfect. The statutes of God are few and brief; and yet can no extravagance of conduct, arising from the most rebellious free-will, prove itself diversified enough to escape them. Were the BIBLE not divine, it would have failed by *excess of precept*. It would have attempted *too much*. We should discover the weakness of a *secondary* mind, through the very pains that would be taken to prove itself an *all-sufficient* one. “Ar-
tis est celare artem;” and we believe that none, except the first and great Artificer, he that

fashioned man in the beginning, and all the structure of the universe, could have devised such a code as that of "Scripture," containing with so much simplicity in so very small a compass, such treasure of wisdom, as appears the more inexhaustible, in proportion as it is the more scrutinized.

But, then, we do not look, in this view, to *direct precept* alone. For the book of God's law neither conveys its force to the heart of the believer by direct precept only, nor by inference from direct precept only; but *the whole matter of it is "life and Spirit."* It addresses itself to spiritual faculties. By the light of its *principles*,^{Lect. ii. pp. 42, 43.} its "history" becomes *precept*; its "prophetic denunciations," *counsel*; its very "controversies," *rich lessons of practical instruction*. It is *an appeal to human nature*. It stoops to meet man as he is, in order to conduct him where he *ought to be*. Altering only a single word of the quotation, we may find a lively picture of its method and its end, in two lines of the Poet;

"Parva quidem primo; mox sese attollit ad auras;
"Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit."

"Metu"
in the original.
Virgil,
Æneid iv.
176, 7.

Our business, then, is to ascertain how far the general matter of Scripture does or does not coincide with familiar positive experience^b.

^b It is obvious that a topic of inquiry like this (its main scope once stated) can only be illustrated in detail, by a few

Before we come, however, to the main and direct point of our proposition, namely, “that the practical and moral records of the Bible are the very picture of man;” I cannot forbear adverting to what appears a most valuable *indirect* evidence of its having proceeded from a thorough knowledge of man’s nature: I mean an evidence resulting from the “manner in which it appears to be provided, in its very foundation, with an *anticipative* answer to all difficulties merely *philosophical* or *speculative*,” an answer, not palpably and artificially inserted with any *view* to repel objection; but arising *naturally* out of the substance of its historical detail.

When we consider, on the one hand, the nature of the Book; its end and object, namely, “human happiness;” its evidently restricted limits, and almost exclusive attention paid to its own proper end alone; its disregard, apparently intentional, of all subordinate subjects; (affording on all such only the scantiest and shortest notices which the necessity of the case demanded;) when we consider *this*, I say, on the one hand, and on the other, the comparatively

selected examples, such as may be sufficient to elucidate the manner in which they have affected *one mind*. It must then be left entirely to the reader’s own thoughtful judgment (if he be disposed to listen to the *kind* of evidence) to select other, or more numerous, or better instances for himself.

unimportant and *subsidiary* influence *only*, which either “physical” or “abstract” knowledge has, or ever can have, by itself, on man’s real *essential* happiness; I think it may well appear, with respect to physical difficulties in particular, a matter even of astonishment — that a *perishable* philosophy should attempt to undermine the rock of *moral* truth, through the medium of objections purely *scientific*.

Let the authenticity of the elder Scriptures be disproved *in other ways*; let the “facts” be otherwise accounted for, or disproved, on which the excellent Leslie has so triumphantly insisted in their favour; let the credibility of *any* “revelation” be disproved; or, at least, the credibility of the Bible, as one, upon *fair moral grounds*, and by better evidence *of a like character*, than that by which it is supported: let this be done, and philosophical objections may then *join in*, to swell the shout of triumph, raised by *other* conquerors over their falling victim. But till that be done, I have no power to understand how such objections are admissible as valid, in such a question. They are objections of a *wrong kind*. Carry them to their utmost height; suppose them in possession of the field; to what conclusion do they come? They only terminate in a gulph of fathomless uncertainty, even in their own sphere. Receive them, (to the rejection of Scripture,) and they leave unprovided

Short and
easy Me-
thod with
the Deists.

for, and unexplained, a mass of *moral difficulty*, of which but to think, in sober seriousness, *without the Bible to explain it*, appears to be treading on the very verge of madness. The inference, however, favourable to the divine authority of Scripture, which we think is to be drawn from its *reserve* upon all physical or abstract questions, extends equally to *both* classes of objection, whether “scientific” or “speculative.” And it is derived from the following general consideration.

KNOWLEDGE, it would appear, has been the deadly snare to man from the very beginning. The temptation of Paradise surely cannot present itself to the unbiassed understanding, as having been other than an inward and spiritual temptation, operating through the *intellect*.

Now, let the question be put, whether, under this view, it be or be not every reflecting man’s own honest experience, that *this* inheritance “of being liable to peculiar temptation through “the intellect,” has descended from our first parent unto his children of this day?

If we take our station among the *gloomier* interpreters of human nature, we shall not for a moment doubt it. If we prefer being the advocates of its *dignity*; then, in proportion as we lay the greater claim of inheritance to man’s loftiest capacities, so will the liability of those capacities to abuse fasten itself upon us, as a

consequence unavoidable: unless indeed it can be proved, either that “experience does not lead us to acknowledge the present state as a state of trial;” or, that “knowledge uniformly carries its own correctives with it;” or, that “learning is always humble;” or “science universally distinguished by exemption from petulance or tyranny:” — which who will undertake to prove?

From the very indistinctness, then, and indefiniteness of holy Scripture on the points in question, (points, on which increase of years has shown, with an increased conviction, the necessity of some general restraint to man,) we derive our indirect evidence of the proposition which we maintain from the text; viz. that “Scripture is the record of that wisdom, which alone *knoweth truly what man is, and needeth not that any should testify of him*, for its better information:” which treats him accordingly, even as such a one as from the beginning it knew him to be; not allowing him, indeed, to become a *rebel*, yet still not wishing him to be a *slave*; resisting (it is most true) the usurpations of “knowledge;” yet, surely, neither condemning its just rule, nor encouraging “ignorance.”

The human intellect is still a sort of “paradise.” Its extent is wide as the extent of the

Cf. Lect.
vii. ad init.

created universe ; within its grasp is *every thing that is pleasant to the sight, and good for wholesome food*. The sun and the moon shining in their courses ; the earth in all its beauty ; the sea with all its wonders ; every art and every science that can either adorn or benefit life ; every detailed branch of morals or of politics ; every lofty flight of poetry ; every thing, in short, that imagination can devise, or research into treasures inexhaustible discover ; *all* are open to its power. From all these sources flows *a stream to water the garden*, parting itself, not into *four*, but into innumerable *heads*.

Cf. Gen. ii.
9, 10.

But there is still a tree, of which it may not taste ; there is some *one* spiritual temptation to be resisted and overcome ; there is *one restriction*. We say to him who is intrusted as the lord of this extensive sovereignty ; “ All “ these things are thine ; but only take heed, “ *that thou be not wise against thy Maker*. “ When thou comest to suspect concerning *Him*, “ be sure that thou art fallen into thy time “ of trial. Be not thou rebellious, like to that “ rebellious house, which fell from heaven. There “ is but *one* thing *here* demanded of thee. Take “ that, when thou shalt find it, in humility ; “ digest it in faith ; and it shall turn within thy “ *taste as honey for sweetness*.”

Cf. Ezek.
iii. 3.

It may perhaps be objected, that “one restriction, *though it be but one*, really circumscribes human happiness.”

But surely it does not, unless it can be proved, that arbitrary choice and peevish discontent are the just and unalienable privileges of natural man. If the Almighty, having gifted his creature with curiosity and intellect, had, at the same time, left him no *sufficient* channels for its proportionate gratification; (nay, let us go much farther, and allow, even for its utmost restlessness;) there might have been some ground of complaint. As things are, we cannot but be persuaded, that no cause of just complaint exists. For surely none will think, that there is *defect* of occupation for the mind; or that the *whole compass of permissible* knowledge has yet been searched by *any* man!

Wherefore, (to close this part of our consideration,) let attention be requested to what appears an *accessory* sign, in this same point, of the adaptation of all our heavenly Father's dealings to that which he *knows to be in man*; I mean, his merciful shortening of the term of this present natural life, after that all-seeing justice had been once compelled to destroy the world for its disobedience.

I call it “merciful;” because, though we can conceive *no* length of days, which could enable man, with his present faculties, to exhaust *all*

that is made subject to his intellect; yet observing the scarcely credible *rapidity* of some minds, and the no less wonderful *retention* of others; we may well conceive a far severer (nay, too severe a) test of resignation and patience to arise from length of years. “To learn, is pleasant:” but to be *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, (I mean merely in matters of lawful, and curious, and ardent speculation,) is a condition, which we may well imagine to grow wearisome by too great length of time. *Hope delayed* might well *make the heart sick*, in such matters. We may find an infidel amusing himself on the brink of the grave with imaginary wishes for a little longer respite, and a little yet, that he might witness the result of this or that speculation^c; but I am persuaded, that the heart which really loves knowledge *most truly and most wisely* will be affected very differently. From every fresh addition to its store (as far as concerns *itself*) it will only derive increase to that desire, wherewith it longs to become disentangled

Τὸ μανθάνειν
ἡδύ. Aristot.
Rhet. b. i. c.
11.

^c This refers to the account of Mr. Hume's death given in the “Letter from Dr. Adam Smith to Mr. Strahan,” prefixed to “Hume's History of England.” I am well aware, that quite a contrary inference to that here implied may be drawn by many, with respect to Mr. Hume's *own case*, from the particular passage here alluded to. Let this speak for itself. I have only to disclaim the intention of throwing out insinuations unjustly or uncharitably.

altogether from a state of *imperfection*; and to be present in the fulness of that light, wherein *every thing that is in part shall be done away*. Cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 10.
 Here, then, in one of the most interesting and important of all points, (I mean, the shortening of human life,) we find a representation of Scripture, which may be accounted favourable to its credibility and divine authority on the safest grounds of reason and experience. For certainly, as to the bare matter of fact, such representation corresponds, in the strictest manner, (as far as we know and have seen,) with the state of life as at present existing: and, accepting it as true, we can perceive at once a *satisfactory explanation* of it, by referring it, as a *provision*, to the wisdom and mercy of an Omnipotent Spirit, who knew, and knows, *what is in man*.

To return. This train of thought has drawn us aside to an application of the text somewhat different from that on which we wish to lay our *stress*, and which is *this*: not only, that the Bible thus discovers a previous contemplation of the habits and faculties of man, and an adequate provision for their wholesome direction; but “that its substance is the very likeness of man:” I mean its *moral* substance, as it appears through all its historical details, its exhortations, and its prohibitions.

I enter on this topic with great reverence: for it is not to be expected, but that the light in

which the sacred Volume will, in what follows, be pointed out to contemplation, in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the point before us, is such as may *startle* and disturb, if not *offend*, many pious sensibilities. If it be a *wrong* light, may He, who is the divine Author of that holy book, mercifully forgive a mistaken apprehension! and may the care of his watchful servants guard it from pernicious effect!

For myself, then, loving and reverencing the Bible with an unreserved affection and homage, I have, nevertheless, been often painfully compelled to think, that, in very many cases, (after accepting it upon the strength of various evidences, and being *more* than *unwilling* either to dispute or to hear it disputed,) we do not allow ourselves to meet its internal difficulties with sufficient courage and honesty. We condemn the unbeliever severely and peremptorily; but if the case be that (and it is undoubtedly possible) of a *respectful* unbeliever, we do not estimate the solid weight of his scruples with that fit measure of *candour* towards *him*, and of *severity* towards *ourselves*, which may at once render us merciful to a condition in which we would not stand for worlds, and *most truly* thankful to that heavenly Comforter whose grace hath saved *us* from it! We rest our own assurance, under perplexities, far too much upon *detached* explanations and *partial* solutions; (nay,

I do not fear to say, upon explanations, ingenious and conclusive enough, where we are willing to accept *the best that can be given*, but decidedly and necessarily *imperfect*;) instead of facing the whole body of enticements tempting to *an evil heart of unbelief*, and accounting for them to our consciences upon *broad general principles*; I mean “the whole body of such “temptation,” as it arises, not out of the reiterated, and (we believe) refuted, objections of our adversaries; but out of the very volume of Scripture itself.

Hebr. iii.
12.

Is it, then, acknowledging more than is true, or than piety and prudence can justify, to acknowledge, that “the Bible, *as a whole*, is not “exactly the *sort* of record, which our first involuntary impulse makes us *wish* to find, as “the revelation of a perfect Being, and the law “of perfect purity?”

If it be not, it is certainly desirable that we should be enabled to account for this; and especially at a season when the holy Volume is disseminated with such general earnestness: for it must unavoidably fall into the hands of many, to whom no rigorous and partial explanations of high doctrines *alone* can render it acceptable, or make it that instrument of grace unto repentance and holiness, which it ought everywhere to be.

Let an impartial attention, therefore, be bestowed on the following considerations.

And first; as far as we can bring ourselves to form any speculative notion or conception of a record of "revelation," *by itself*; (which, however, it is not very easy, on several accounts, to do;) shall we not invest it with something of a *noble* character; free from the taint, and *possible approach*, of fleshly impurities; as bright in morals, as the sun is bright in the firmament; magnificent, elevated, refined? Is not this the *sort* of character which any one would try to give it, who *invented* a book, which he desired to pass off for an original "revelation?"

I speak of a case purely speculative, and abstracted from all comparison with *that* which we believe to *be* "revelation;" because, the BIBLE having once prescribed a *pattern*, by which we are *now* fully aware what such a record positively *is*, our thoughts upon the subject are no longer absolutely our own. It is not likely, that any subsequent imposture, in any manner grafted *upon* Scripture, (as the Koran,) would assume a tone essentially *opposed* to that of its prototype. "Imposture" will always take its clew from antecedent reality: its work is that of *distortion*, not of *invention*. We are supposing here (if it be within our grasp of supposition) a case of *first invention*.

I conceive, then, that the abstract thought of "revelation" is, a thought of something both directly and indirectly free from any *recognition* of

the “painful” and “repulsive;” of something pure and noble, in all its parts and bearings equally ; and without any constitutional sign of “imperfection” whatsoever.

Analogous to which thought is another, which suggests itself with regard to “history:” where (speaking generally and fairly) may it not be assumed to be something like a *principle* with the “historian,” to *refine*, rather than to expose, grossness? Not *so* to refine, as altogether to suppress truth ; but *studiously* (as far as abilities and opportunity allow) to make the best, and most becoming, and least offensive arrangement of his materials? I mean, as a matter of art and skill. If there be no particular purpose to be served by a more distressful tone of colouring ; but especially if it be the writer’s object to render prominent the characters and fortunes of his own countrymen ;—surely it is so ! The mantle of history is, indeed, at best but a stately pall, which covers only dead men’s bones, and real uncleanness ; but, like a pall, it covers them gracefully. The principle of the historian, standing over the grave of kingdoms and of society, seems, in its proportion, not unlike to that of the merciful man, beside the grave of a frail and fallen individual,—to speak “nothing of the dead “ but good.”

Nor will it be sufficient, when we shall endeavour presently to draw an inference from

Lect. v.
part 1. §. 1.

some of the "histories" of Scripture, as connected with this thought, favourable to the authority of the earlier Testament, as a *revelation of truth*, to attribute *all* their harshness and ungracefulness merely to earlier times and ruder circumstances, or oriental figures of speech. It has been well contended, in the first place, that such rudeness and barbarity, in the times when much of the earlier Scripture was committed to writing, are too carelessly assumed: and, secondly, we think there is a peculiarity of *essential* character in the tone of the Old Testament history, which separates it from all others, by a difference greater than merely accidental circumstances can reasonably account for.

See Horne's
Letters on
Infidelity,
Letter xiii.

But (to proceed with our argument) the *abstract notion* of a "revelation" is now difficult even to be conceived; because the revelation of the BIBLE, which has so grown up with us and insinuated its influence throughout all our faculties, has so completely *undeceived* us, in regard to any such preconception as we think might be naturally formed.

Not that the revelation of the Bible, *as it is*, (taking both Testaments together,) is not of an *exalted* character. Lofty it is, in its declared *end*, beyond man's utmost thoughts of loftiness; promising blessings, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. Lofty, too, it is, in its now

1 Cor. ii. 9.

assured, though silent *means*, beyond all human thoughts of loftiness; when it offers the help of a supernatural grace; even though the operation of that grace, in ordinary, be more gentle than the fall of dew upon the grass, and incomprehensible as the breathing of the wind. Cf. Hosea
xiv. 5.
John iii. 8.

But I mean, it has undeceived us so completely, in regard to its effect *as a whole*; with respect to those features of its exhibition, which display our own present selves; with respect to the tempers and affections pleasing or displeasing in the sight of our Creator. Man's natural desire would be to scale the heavens by his own excellence: it is the will of God, that he should first stoop, even to the very dust from whence he was taken. Now it is at least a *paradox*, on the first sight, that the "*book of life*," the "*oracles of God*," should (as a whole) be found to present a record and a representation the most *humiliating*: perhaps, of *all* records, the one most unfavourably stated for the honour of its own subjects; an almost uniform picture of disobedience; a most afflicting catalogue of guilt! that almost everywhere in it, when we *would look* Lect. vii. §.
1.
Isaiah v. 7. *for judgment, we behold oppression; for righteousness, we behold a cry!*

I do not speak thus, even of the Old Testament, indiscriminately; neither is any serious account meant to be taken of what may be

Lect. v. ad
init.

esteemed mere painfulnesses of *language*^d. But, with respect to its *matter* only, (under certain qualifications hereafter to be mentioned,) will it be disputed, that the picture of man contained in holy Scripture is one of the least acceptable, and least prepossessing, that can well be imagined?

Cf. Gen. iii.
11.

For is it not the shrinking of a sensitive delicacy; a consciousness of innate propensity to wrong; a fear of the subtle and contagious poison of impurity; that distressing, lively, recurrence of the primeval sense of shame, *How knowest thou that thou wast naked?*—that makes so many jealous of disseminating the Bible, as being even a *dangerous* book?—Or, again: is it not the melancholy detail of wickedness; and that, not amongst the depraved alone, but mixed up with the conduct of the very men recorded there, as favoured children of the Most High; is it not *this*, much more than local difficulties, or verbal obscurities, which has led good and pious persons to recommend curtailments^e and abridg-

^d These, it is probable, (as, for example, 1 Kings xxi. 21. or 2 Kings xviii. 27.) are to be attributed chiefly to our *translators*, and to the changes of our own vernacular idioms.

^e For example: What general tone of feeling must we conceive to have dictated a passage such as this; written by a learned and express advocate of the truth of Christianity? “Out of *sixty-six* books which form the contents of the Old “and New Testament, not above *seven* in the Old, nor above

ments of it? or to fence it round so carefully with comments?—which, again, has given rise to so many rash and irreverent criticisms? to imprudent freedom of concession, on the particular point of “inspiration?” and to that far too great reserve (in some time past) on the great subject of “original depravity,” *as vitally necessary to illustrate the Gospel*, which seems now to have produced (in part) in our own Church, an overwhelming violence of *re-action*, such as threatens to confound all men alike in a vague and general spirit of self-crimination,—not *convincing*, because not *intelligible*? See Lect. v. ad init.

I assume it to be true, that some such sensi-

“*eleven* in the New, appear to be calculated for the study or “comprehension of the unlearned.” Maltby, “Thoughts on the Bible Society,” p. 12. London. 1812.

^f I beg to be understood, as not intending to speak disrespectfully of that scrupulous concern about the Bible just now alluded to : far otherwise. Under very many supposable circumstances ; where we really accept *all*, thoughtfully, as Christians ought to do, to *prefer* some portions of holy Writ to others, either for private use, (as it may happen,) or for our own *almost exclusive personal* meditation, seems a thing much unlike the conduct subjected to that awful threat, which closes the Revelation of St. John. (chap. xxii. 19.) To insist, systematically, upon the reading of *all* Scripture *alike*, (with more respect to an artificial order of “chapters,” than to the real state of individual cases,) appears an error, not different *in kind* from that tyranny, which we so strongly deprecate, (Lect. I.) of “insisting upon a search after difficulties, where the heart is satisfied already.”

tive misgivings as these on account of Scripture, and for some such reasons, *do exist*.

Keeping in mind, then, that the holy Scriptures approve themselves to our acceptance, as a revelation from the only true God, by an accumulated weight of *other* evidences; let us now look at them, internally, with a regard to these foregoing considerations.

And if the first be capable of being understood, and be not disallowed, the inference from that will be, that the pervading tone of Scripture, as a whole purporting to be a divine revelation, is quite at variance with our original and natural conception of what a *pretended* revelation would be likely to be. It appears to me to be altogether improbable; contrary, at once, to the main scope and tenor of all the writings of “classical antiquity;” to the thoughts and wishes of sober-minded, but “speculative Christians” themselves; and to the conclusions of modern unbelievers, the “theorists of an ideal perfectibility[§]” (and let it be well considered, what the

§ I mean by this to express an opinion, that it is the prevailing tendency of all these respective classes of writers rather to *exalt*, than to *depress*, our estimate of human nature. Even the *Satirists* of antiquity do not leave an impression on the mind of such debasement, as results from the solemn denunciations of the Bible. And I think it needs no proof, that all more modern speculative reformers, whether they convey their sentiments in the form of professed ro-

force of that improbability must be, in which the sentiments of three such varieties of persons as these unite :) that “man, writing for his own purposes, and from the dictation of his own faculties only, should, *originally*, either have *conceived* the *prohibitions*, or *ventured* on the *proposal* of a law, involving such a representation of man and human nature, as the code of the Old Testament exhibits, with a view to the conviction, or control, of any persons whatsoever.” True, certain, as the representations are, *man* could not have *dared* to give them utterance, depending on his own strength alone; even if we can suppose it possible, that, at so early a period, he should have had such insight into truth.

Again: it would appear, considering the records of Scripture in the light of a “history” only, that it is scarcely conceivable, (if I have not mistaken the common sentiments of mankind in such matters,) that an original historian, narrating, in so great part, the chronicles of his own ancestors, would, by guidance of his own feelings only, have selected such an assemblage of topics, as the *earlier* Scripture history (in particular) details; or brought them forward in so prominent a manner. For it is no *incidental* mention of delinquency, occurring

mance, or serious theory, assume the existence of a race of beings, much better than men actually are.

here and there, that disturbs us in the narratives of the Old Testament; but a *pervading* gloominess of colouring, so unlike the apparent ordinary tenor of history, as seems inexplicable, unless attributed to the guidance of no ordinary spirit.

In explanation of which, need we be afraid to ask, whether, *divesting* holy Scripture of its *authority*, and of that sacred and inseparable reverence with which it is now encompassed in the believer's heart, we should peculiarly desire to possess it, *as a mere volume*; or to commend it, as such, to universal circulation at this day?

In *this*, or *any* light, the impression severally made by the "Old" and "New" Testaments, would be very distinct: those made by different *parts* of *either* would be very distinct also. But this is not the question. We must remember, that our faith is demanded alike to *all*. If taken in the mass, therefore, would not the admiration of most minds towards it, as a mere volume, be very circumscribed? while many (for the reasons above given) would shrink from it with an irrepressible *aversion*. Parents, at least, would not be anxious *then* to make it an early study of their children: and however much it might be *afterwards* enjoyed by minds of matured learning and critical taste, or valued as a curious storehouse of antiquarian research; (which are attractions of a nature to captivate but *few*

minds, among very many;) it is certainly a volume, which, *without authority, and an indwelling Spirit of its own to secure it from abuse*, the instructed could not desire to see, commonly, in the hands of the uninstructed!

I am well aware, that different minds, and constitutions, and habits, will be affected by very different evidences: wherefore, it is to be expected, that the argument now offered will be regarded with very unequal measures of respect. Yet I cannot but think, that a sincere attention to this internal character of Scripture may be profitable; and, when surveyed in all its bearings, may affect *many* dispositions, as one of the very surest proofs of its original authority.

For bring the *collected body* of the picture, hereby presented, to the mind's eye, *at once*; and look at *these* familiar sights within our own experience.

A thing unpalatable in itself, distasteful, nay, repulsive, is, with one consent, pronounced by *all*, who have once, in sincerity, accepted it, to be their very health, and strength, and most exquisite relish. A simplicity, open to the bitterest scorn, appears at once transmuted into an enlightened candour; a nakedness, so unconcealed, is at once covered with a veil of modesty; a plainness of speech, manifestly exposed to ridicule, comes to appear the very evidence of re-

ality and truth; difficulties, and subjects of cavil, (in *number*, almost as *many*, as in *substance* they are *unimportant*;) all at once present themselves as fit subjects only for a temper of silent reverence, and more severe self-introspection:—*these* are phenomena, in the believer's case, which we shall observe, and must secretly account for to ourselves.

Again: while this is so, there is evidently no *miracle* at work. We see the gross and “natural” impressions of the book still exerting their *own* influence upon the mind of the unbeliever. The voices of scorn and laughter are still levelled at those very things, in which *we* perceive no *room* for ridicule. We can clearly trace the swellings of an intellectual pride within the breast of the scorner; as though he had found a *purser justice* for himself, and a *nobler wisdom*; and saw and could expose weakness and injustice *there*, where his fellow man no longer doubts that there is both equity and power:—these are appearances, in the opposing case, which must be accounted for, too.

But there is only *one* way of accounting for both.

If we try the supposition of a general intellectual debasement, or original weakness of understanding, among the communion of “believers,” or of decided intellectual superiority, charac-

terizing the average of their antagonists, it helps us nothing; for (as it has been said already) such hypothesis is not borne out by facts.

If we could discover, concerning a reasonable individual, (hitherto accounted an enlightened man in his generation, as well by enemies as friends, but not hitherto *spiritually minded*,) that, from the moment he became a sincere practical Christian, his intellectual powers dried up, and withered; and he became narrow-minded, and lost his attainments of former knowledge; *this* might explain much. But neither is this so.

“Christians” are no less capable of all the duties of “men of science,” or of “good citizens,” than those who differ from them. They are no less capable of threading all the mazes of perplexed reasoning; of establishing the just canons of reasoning; of weighing evidence, by canons established.

Of course we are speaking thus only of the higher capacities, both among believers and unbelievers. Let an *equality*, therefore, in all *natural* points be admitted between these, generally; and he who first transgresses the limit, to demand more than such equality, shall be pronounced the less candid man, and the less im-

Note b.
Lect. iii.

Is it possible, then, to doubt, as a mere question of fact and of experience, that there is *not*

essentially in the human *understanding* itself any invincible resistance to a “revelation?” nor even to a revelation encompassed, as the Bible is, with all those avenues to subordinate objection, which prove a stumbling block to so very many?—which (I am quite willing to admit) it may be, and is, a severe *spiritual temptation* to overcome, in the outset; but still a temptation *not insuperable*.

Cf. Lect. ii.
pp. 50—57.

Is it possible to doubt this, on the one hand? and on the other, can it be denied, (as the correlative of the same proposition,) that *then* there *is*, there *must* positively *be*, a yet higher and more discerning power still, than the utmost compass of mere intellect? a power which can *subdue* the human understanding, without *destroying* it; which can *tame*, without *annihilating* it; which can *enlarge* it, by a new and *additional* branch of apprehension altogether, *without* demanding, in exchange, the *sacrifice* of any of its former possessions?

Cf. Pascal,
Thoughts,
xiv. 1.
xxix. 2.

Cf. Lect. v.
part 2. §. 2.

Look at these things, I say, and the impression arising from that internal character of “Scripture,” which has been here described, must appear likely to have proved to many, and likely yet to prove, among the strongest witnesses of its divine authority. If, indeed, we have not been attributing, throughout, an imaginary character to Scripture altogether;—if it be *true*, that while these painful things are matter of offence

to unbelieving minds; while to natural apprehension in itself, and by itself, such countenance of a *divine* record presents features altogether undiscernible; no such offence takes place in minds rooted in the belief of Christ. What, then, is it which has removed the obstacle?—

“The talisman is FAITH^h.”

Southey's
Thalaba,
v. 254.

Place the light of REDEMPTION at the boundary of these darker views and records: let it be seen, that the sufferings and death of JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, were the realities to which all former shadows, and dispensations, and preparations led: let it be thought, what a sum and character of guiltiness must have been in man, at once to require and

^h Here, therefore, as during the progress of the foregoing thoughts an objection may have suggested itself of this nature; that “if such view of Scripture be correct; then what becomes of all the laboured eulogies, and high flown panegyrics, which so many learned and eloquent men have bestowed on holy Scripture, as a work unrivalled in the grandeur of its thoughts and sublimity of its composition?” *here* comes in the very *secret* of the case, by way of answer. Such panegyrists have bestowed their praise under the influence of “faith.” Under the influence of faith, they have been received by others, assented to, extended. And, in truth, there cannot be *any* praise or admiration bestowed on holy Scripture, when surveyed by “faith,” and “taste,” and “learning” united together, which it will not warrant, in every respect. It is the *volume of the Spirit*: wherefore its excellences, surveyed through the medium of *appropriate faculties*, are necessarily inexhaustible.

to justify this transcendent mystery: let it be considered, that, as the comprehension of all nations within the saving benefits of that awful sacrifice was, and is, the divine purpose, *therefore* his own recorded Word must be of a tendency and power, not calculated to flatter human pride, but to abase it; that man may come *through trial of his spirit* into heaven: let it be perceived and felt that the *picture of ourselves*, which the BIBLE exhibits, is a *real* one; that the original Inspirer of that holy volume assuredly *knew what was in man*, from the very beginning; that he there tells man *truth*, for man's own good; that man's *happiness* is his desire:—place the light of *these* considerations, as a beacon, at the end of the inquiry, and the WORD OF GOD becomes indeed a *lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths*. The waters of Marah are sweetened, *now*; the death that was, before, in the pottage, is turned into life!

Ps. cxix.
105.

Exod. xv.
23, 24, 25.
2 Kings iv.
38—41.

For reflecting *thus*, and being convinced already that the Bible is a book wherein *alone* he may look for sure and unerring *truth*; the believer speedily perceives, that *two* cases *might* have been submitted to him, in either of which he might much more easily have been led to doubt the authority of a volume, purporting to be the depository of authentic truth: namely; either “if it were found recording crimes, of

which man was never known to be capable;" or, "leaving out all mention of others, of which he is known to have been guilty."

For it were strange indeed, that an Omniscient Spirit should not know even the very inmost thoughts of his own creature, and raise the voice of prohibition and of warning against every sort of crime. Wherefore this fearful, naked, exposure of man's worst and most hidden vices, which holy Writ displays, becomes one of the most prevailing arguments, with an awakened conscience, to persuade to a like thought, concerning it, with that which the woman of Samaria had of Christ; *Come, see a book, which tells me all things that ever I did: is not this the Lord's?* Cf. John iv. 29.

But the sequel of this thought, and the illustration, in detail, of our whole position, will be found in the two ensuing Lectures.

LECTURE V.

JOHN ii. 25.

For he knew what was in man.

WE paused in the last Lecture, in considering the volume of holy Scripture as a picture of human nature. The argument then maintained is now to be exemplified by a series of illustrative passages ; from which it may appear to every hearer's own judgment, how far the position taken is, or is not, supported by the appearances from which it is deduced.

It may be remembered, that the argument was rested upon the gloomier representations of Scripture. That very picture of depravity which it exhibits, and which (it is conceived) must form so strong a source of objection and dislike to the Old Testament, in the mind of "the natural man," was considered to be in itself a most convincing evidence of its divine authority and truth.

Nevertheless, though it was argued that Scripture presents the most humiliating portraiture of human nature, and *that* intentionally, to lead man into knowledge of himself, as the subject of

its operation ; it should be added, that the Bible does not exhibit an *unmixed* image of evil ; because if it did, it would not be that exact resemblance which we maintain it is, of the character of man.

In subjoining which qualification, we do not feel the consciousness either of having carried the main proposition unreasonably far, to countenance a partial construction ; or of having added any such inconsistent exception, as may neutralize or destroy its force.

Art. ix. The representation of evil was intended, and is necessary, for the analysis of doctrine. We hold the opinion, that man is a being “ very far gone “ from” an “ original righteousness,” in which he was created. And it is maintained, that the whole substance of Scripture so fully justifies this doctrine, as to be utterly inexplicable, and therefore as a record of divine wisdom inadmissible, without it.

It is, however, contended also, that with this doctrine, found to be involved in the substance of its histories, and to be in harmony with the end of its great provisions, Scripture commends itself in a peculiar manner to our belief and acceptance ; as a record which, while it extends to the very root of our disease, and so alone points out the true method of recovery from it, falls in thereby with the observations of our own personal experience.

These two things then, which we have affirmed of holy Writ, namely, that it contains the most humiliating view of man, and yet not one of unmixed evil, are not only not inconsistent, but explanatory one of the other. For while it is necessary for us to trace our *elementary principles* up to their source, through the very worst symptoms of a moral disorder which man exhibits; (for how, except through scrutiny of deeds which man has done, can “that which is in man” be fully developed, or rightly inferred?) nevertheless, the aspect of *embodied evil*, as existing in real life, as displayed practically in its concrete form in the subject to whom it belongs, will differ materially from the cast of its own intrinsic quality, as seen uncovered and delineated in the abstract. The practical appearances of evil will show much gradation, and be found susceptible of many comparisons, according to the condition of different individuals. The doctrinal statement concerning it will be but one; having for its purpose, to affirm the original unsoundness that lies in the constitution of human nature: not to fix the measure of this or that man’s guilt, or to make comparisons of good and evil; but to pronounce a general judgment upon all,—the result of comparisons already made.

While, therefore, not to discover a full and intimate acquaintance with the quality and com-

pass of evil itself, would be—not to have a perfect insight into the truth; and yet, to display the power of that evil otherwise than as it is seen practically existing in its effects, would not be to give that real likeness of ourselves which we seek and expect; it becomes evident, that in narrations (or records of whatever kind) which set forth the lives and actions of men in every varied stage of moral responsibility, (and that, under the influence not only of rational motives, but of a supernatural grace also, more or less, from the very beginning;) we cannot look for any other representation, than of some such mixture of good and evil conduct as the corresponding varieties of man, diversely influenced, present to our own sight at this day. We think that both the descriptions given by the earlier Scripture, and the principles to be inferred from them, are exactly what they need to be.

Cf. Lect. ii.
p. 32.

And, here, it will not be disputed by believers, that Scripture itself must offer to us at once the best method of describing, and likewise of addressing accountable moral beings. Wherefore, since the natural current of reflection has thus led to the mention of a doctrine, which has perhaps suffered almost more than any other under the anatomizing cruelty of disputation; it seems not an improper place to interpose what may prove to some, in their practical handling of the Article of “Original Sin,” a reason for dis-

erect forbearance, as to the special question of its *measure* in the individual.

It is a point which must itself be admitted on all hands by reasonable men, (although so very few, in the heat of argument, truly abide by it,) that a right faith and apprehension of holy Scripture is to be formed, rather by looking to its end and general scope, than by any inference from detached passages, however strong towards a particular effect. Neither can it be doubted that the *facts* of Scripture and its *doctrines* must be essentially in harmony.

Is it fair, then, or rather is it possible, rightly to prescribe the bounds of any doctrine^a, without an impartial estimate of the *facts* of Scripture, (wherever these properly belong to the question,) as well as of its positive texts?

With respect, therefore, to "original depravity," seeing that a conviction of the doctrine itself, and not of its degrees, is what concerns our everlasting peace, that we may apprehend the method of our restoration; I ask, whether it seems possible to assume particulars with equal certainty as to its precise *limits*? more especially, whether it be fair to assume its extent to be

^a I mean, any doctrine that is in any degree commensurable with reason and experience, as well as declared in express revelation. To such subjects of *pure revelation* as the mystery of the Trinity (e. g.) the present considerations cannot apply.

Cf. Lect. ii.
pp. 34, 35.

without limit, under an impartial balance of Scripture history? And if the facts of Scripture history be (as we contend they are) the facts of human nature; if neither in our forefathers, nor in ourselves, we can honestly discover other features than those belonging to a race of accountable and improveable beings—*both* passing as sojourners and pilgrims through the same scene of moral discipline, the same positive impediments; if we perceive that both *they* were *very wicked*, and so are *we*; but if neither in them, nor in ourselves, we can precisely unfold the operations of grace, as distinct from those of our natural faculties; if we cannot, among *either*, detect and satisfactorily show (except it be in a few cases avowedly miraculous) the influence of any *irresistible* control; if a faith, of which we trust and dare to say that it must be a true and living faith, can *without* any such interpretation approve itself to the consciences alike and understandings of men evidently wise and learned, and by their lives proved to be “spiritually minded;” what shall forbid that the evidence of *facts* be received at once, in arbitration, to restrain our confidence of assertion, as to the specific point, of the measure and degree of this original taint, among persons now very unequally advanced in the progress of their moral probation?

For if we admit the doctrine, as affirmed

generally, to be true of all men, what (after all) can its precise admeasurement profit unto edifying? If a Christian man be quite convinced that there is no hope of heaven but through the sufferings and mediation of Jesus Christ, nor without transformation and renewal of the heart after that image of holiness which *he* has enjoined; what can it benefit to dwell upon depravity, as though the Redeemer could be thereby honoured? If the believer be already grafted into *the true vine*, the test whereby to *glorify* John xv. 8. *his Father*, afterwards is, *that he bear much fruit*. Let the facts of Scripture, then, be weighed under this impression: not to confirm in any man a contumacious and unspiritual pride; (if weighed impartially, this is a thing which they can never do;) but to remove from the tabernacle of the faithful that supposititious cloud which sometimes broods upon it; and to deliver the truly humble and self-abased spirit from the yoke of an unimaginable degradation. Cf. Lect. iv. p. 99.

I. With this explanatory provision, then, let us now go on to the proposed adduction of particulars: of which, if any be thought not so well selected as they might have been, and yet the mind be favourably affected towards the general view which has been already presented, it will not suffer any such unskilful selection, merely, to Cf. Lect. iv. (Note b.) invalidate the argument, but will supply better instances for itself.

Gen. ix.
20—27.

I. 1. An early instance then, illustrative at once of all the considerations upon which our argument proceeds, is to be found (I think) in the case of Noah and his sons, as related in the end of the ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis. A melancholy specimen, indeed, of human frailty, consider it in what point of view we will! It is a narration altogether at variance with every notion which we entertain (speaking critically) of seemliness or dignity. It is an event, which no historian, as such, would naturally have recorded, even though he recorded the consequences. It is a detail of twofold painfulness; the painfulness of infirmity, in the patriarch; and that of guilt, in his son. It is manifestly a tale, from which the ear and eye of refined female delicacy, at least, would involuntarily shrink. In what various and easy ways it stands exposed to the derision and scorn of infidelity, need not to be pointed out.

Luke xxi.
34.

But how does it appear to a Christian, looking at it only through the light of humility and faith? Is it human nature, or is it not? Is it striking, or is it not? What, if we glance in pity from the patriarch's infirmity to our Redeemer's solemn admonition, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness?* and from the curse pronounced upon Canaan, the son of the undutiful Ham, to the fearfully lively warning of the

Wise Man, *The eye that mocketh at his father* Prov. xxx. 17.
 —the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and
 the young eagles shall eat it? And then, for a
 double purpose, let us direct our thoughts to
 the patriarch's consequent prophecy; pondering,
 first, whether experience cannot find an echo to
 the curse of Canaan in the general fortune of un-
 dutiful children; and, secondly, whether the
 wonderful accomplishments of the prophecy it-
 self may not, at once, discover its true Author,
 and the special providence of the whole transac-
 tion ^b.

Now if there be absurdity in any of these
 views, or violence offered though but to lan-
 guage, or possibility of misleading either a soul
 to evil, or even a critical judgment into weak-
 ness, let them be rejected. But if not, there is
 at least an advantage on the side of faith and
 piety, in the contemplation of such a passage:
 and this advantage the Satirist shall, uninten-
 tionally, express for us:

————— “e cælo descendit Γνώσι σεαυτὸν,
 “Figendum et memori tractandum pectore.”

Juv. Sat.
 xi. 27, 28.

I. 2. To take another instance—it is scarcely

^b It may be noted, further, (with regard to our explanatory observation,) that here is, in this very first (and most dis-
 tressing) example, an instance of *not unmixed* depravity. And
 what abundant reason have we ourselves, as the descendants
 of Japheth, to adore the mercy of an all-wise Lord, who hath
 surely annexed exceeding great reward, either present or
 to come, to the right performance of every duty.

possible to read, without distress and shame, the much more painful relations of the nineteenth chapter of the same book. Yet at this day, when the holier influence of Christianity has been working its way in the affections and hearts of men for eighteen hundred years, can we repel even these revolting records, as a libel on our nature? as an exposure which we can pronounce unnecessary, from its incongruity with experience? and therefore reject, as an imagination of evil, on the score of gratuitous impurity?

I. 3. But let us refer both these and the preceding examples to such a chapter as the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus; and by that comparison, learn to see how each conspires to explain the other, and how all speak for themselves (as specimens of human nature) in vindication, at once, and in proof of their original recording. It will be perceived how the facts of history bear out the law of Moses, in its most offensive prohibitions; and, by consequence, how imperfect in its knowledge of man's nature a law, designed for the extinction of abominations and for the promotion of purity, must have appeared now, had the legislator forborne (from deference to human prepossessions, whether past, present, or to come) to proclaim penalties and judgments for crimes avowedly existing. It is most true, that very many of the prohibitions of the Levitical law tell us of things, such as we do not

like to hear; of things, which it is most perplexing, at first sight, to meet with in the pure word of God. But when we consider, for what thousands of reasonable creatures, for what varieties of condition and of knowledge, the Bible is the sole *independent* mental and moral provision; do they tell us any thing which it is not expedient for man to know, in order that he may abhor?

Cf. Lect. vi.
II. §. 1.

There is, moreover, a circumstance connected with all these more afflictive narrations, of the very greatest importance; and which (in its full compass, at any rate) I conceive to be altogether peculiar to the records and the prohibitions of Scripture.

I mean, that whether it be the express edict of a *law* that is before us, to bring it to our observation, or only the chronicle of a too real *history*; “gross offence is never represented to us “but in connection with the divine displeasure.”

The *sin* of Scripture uniformly *finds* its perpetrator *out*. If there be not a penalty by law directly denounced, there is divine justice visibly executed; or if not this immediately, and on the instant, yet indirectly it is sure to appear in the sequel of the offender’s history; either simply in the shape of suffering, or more pointedly, in some congenerous retaliation. *With the froward*, we shall discover the Almighty always *froward*; we shall always meet *the curse of the*

See Numb.
xxxii. 23.

Psal. xviii.
26.

Prov. iii.
33.

Gen. xlii.
21, 22.

Lord in the house of the wicked. Witness only, as a familiar instance, the remorse of Joseph's brethren, as expressed by themselves. And let it be remarked, that it may probably be by help of this consideration, that we shall best understand, to spiritual and moral benefit, some of the particulars of the perplexing history of the patriarch Jacob. I do not speak of the unsearchable counsel of the Most High in respect of Jacob's "election," in preference to Esau: there is a day, when that will be fully explained; and till then we may be well satisfied to leave it. But if it be questioned, whether all the moral transactions of that patriarch's life were either approvable, or approved by Him who chose him, there is an answer out of Jacob's own mouth; *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been:* and there is a melancholy tale of intermediate wretchedness among his family, to prove this the patriarch's assertion true.

Gen. xlvii.
9.

Now in this naked exposure of the most hateful criminality, and in this uniform and unreserved reprobation of it, coupled together, there is, I think, the very strongest testimony to the authority of Scripture, on both grounds.

I. 4. But to take a somewhat different exemplification of that which is our immediate subject. The "hardening of Pharaoh's heart" seems to have supplied, always, a favourite topic of reproach against the divine perfections. But let us

contemplate it under that view of the apparent dealing of the Almighty with his creatures, which has been already suggested; as a voluntary delinquency on the offender's part, of which the *manner* only of its being permitted to take effect is *laid open* for our sakes: how will it appear then? It is, doubtless, a picture of extreme depravity in its peculiar point of *obstinacy*: yet (making only the natural allowances for difference in the form of present dispensation) surely the picture itself is justified as real, by abundant experience. It is a picture which only takes the aspect of a most sound and provident *admonition*. Compare it with the *effect* of our Saviour's saying to the Jews, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life*. Compare it with the pains continually wasted, with the motives ineffectually urged, with the terrors unprofitably revealed, to persuade Christians to obedience at this day. If any quarrel any longer with such merciful *warning*, so as to make it a stumbling-block, for which to gainsay the Bible; what is to be said, but that, by such very offence taken, they prove its truth; proving, themselves, that such calamitous hardness of heart does exist in human nature? Else, why do they cling to any vain pretence, rather than accept the medicine meant to heal them, because they do not choose to take it as it is prescribed, of bitter ingredients, by the

Lect. iii.
§. 4. pp.
66, 67.

John v. 40,
42.
Cf. with
this again
Matt. xxiii.
33.

great and only Physician, that has any real power to cure?

I. 5. I turn, with pleasure, to a more consolatory example, not less confirmative of our general proposition; and appeal to the book of Psalms, (when viewed in the reflected light of the Christian revelation,) as an abiding testimony of *what is in man*, as well as of what man needs to be. If these divine compositions deserve the eulogy of Hooker, they supply (of course) an example applicable to our purpose, though reaching very far beyond it. It is *he* that shall speak their praise and character, notwithstanding it be to repeat a passage so well known:

Eccles. Pol.
b. v. 37.

“ What is there necessary for man to know,
 “ which the Psalms are not able to teach? They
 “ are to beginners an easy and familiar introduc-
 “ tion; a mighty augmentation of all virtue and
 “ knowledge, in such as are entered before;
 “ a strong confirmation of the most perfect
 “ among others. Heroical magnanimity; ex-
 “ quisite justice; grave moderation; exact wis-
 “ dom; repentance unfeigned; unwearied pa-
 “ tience; the mysteries of God; the sufferings of
 “ Christ; the terrors of wrath; the comforts of
 “ grace; the works of Providence over this
 “ world; and the promised joys of that world
 “ which is to come; all good necessarily to be
 “ either known, or done, or had, this one celestial

“ fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief
 “ or disease, incident unto the soul of man, any
 “ wound or sickness named, for which there is
 “ not in this treasure-house a present comfortable
 “ remedy at all times ready to be found. Hereof
 “ it is, that we covet to make the Psalms espe-
 “ cially familiar to all.” This, indeed, is eulogy :
 but is it undeserved eulogy ? We believe that it is Cf. Lect. iv.
(Note h.)
 quite true. But let us consider, and we shall per-
 ceive that it cannot be true, unless that book pro-
 ceeded from a knowledge, both retrospective and
 prospective of the whole of *that which is in man*.

I. 6. I cannot forbear to notice, with regard
 to the same point, the Book of Ecclesiastes. It
 has, undoubtedly, its difficulties : but that its
 authority should ever have been questioned on
 the score of immorality or impiety^c, appears to
 argue unreasonable misapprehension. It is a
 book, in every point of view, remarkable. To
 the Jews, without express revelation of a life to
 come, it must have been, as it were, *a light* 2 Pet. i. 19.
shining in a dark place, which the darkness John i. 5.
could not adequately comprehend : but to us,
 on whom the light hath shined, it appears
 very differently. As a *buttress* to the Gospel,
 resting on the sure ground of human nature ; as
 an anticipative deference of the perfection of hu-
 man wisdom and human experience to the pure

^c See the introduction to this Book in Poole's English Annotations : also, the same in the Family Bible.

simplicity of the wisdom to come; it seems to deserve a rank amongst the most extraordinary possessions which the will of God hath caused to be preserved, for the full establishment and consolation of his existing Church. Concerning the specimen of frailty, which it exposes (or rather, confesses) in the person of its *human* author, we may, with very reasonable faith, acquiesce contentedly in the pious remark of Bishop Patrick : “ And perhaps,” he says, “ as God suffered St. Thomas to doubt of our Saviour’s resurrection, “ for the greater confirmation of our faith, by “ the satisfaction he at last received ; so he let “ this great man go astray, that by his dear- “ bought experience he might teach us this wis- “ dom—to keep the closer to God in faithful “ obedience.”

Commen-
tary on this
book.

I. 7. As multiplication of detached passages is always tedious, and the *New Testament* as yet lies untouched ; I will subjoin only one example more from the *Old Testament*, from the writings of the Prophets ^d.

^d I refer to them, here, not as *prophets*, in the peculiar and highest import of the word ; but as *expositors and preachers of divine truth* to corrupted man. And let a caution be expressed, generally, (with reference to this distinction,) that it behoves all prudent persons to give good attention that they do not handle the prophetic writings, so frequently the utterances of a *peculiar* inspiration, rashly : that they neither assert the *specific* dignity of *prophecy* for that which is prophetic only as *the divine enunciation of everlasting truth* ; nor (on the

Does it, then, amount to exaggeration to contend, that, looking at the general tenor of the writings of the prophets, in their lower capacity, of reproof, warning, or exhortation, we may almost suppose them to look upon our own very selves? to address their particular regard to the things which we daily witness with our own eyes? Shall not a warning voice like this, be truly regarded as belonging to words that never pass away? as a possession appertaining to believers, in its full force, for ever? *Woe unto them* Is. v. 8, 9. *that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! In mine ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Are not nature and experience here?*

Again: *Woe unto them that call evil good, and* ver. 20, 21. *good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*
 Again: *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink* ver. 22, 23. *wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!*

other hand) insist upon a general application of that, which either may be shown with fairer reason to be limited; or which, through metaphor and figure, may mislead.

Are not these the voices of a Spirit that *knows what is in man* to the uttermost? I forbear to point any special application of them: it might seem uncharitable, and cannot be necessary on an occasion like the present. But I am sure, that the shaft of them pierces deeply into that human nature which we know: the curse of them must enter into many houses, even in this Christian land, and *consume them with the timber thereof and the stones thereof*. Particular chapters of the Bible (we are told) have so affected, as almost by themselves to convert, particular persons, to belief of Christianity. I could say of this fifth chapter of Isaiah alone, “Almost it persuadeth me to believe that holy Scripture is “the voice of God!”

Cf. Zech. v.
4.

II. But our position, as depending on the evidence of the *Old Testament*, must, with these examples, be sufficiently illustrated; and it is time to see how it will appear under a purer dispensation.

Do we, then, meet in the *New Testament* with a recognition, and (if I may so speak) acceptance, of *this same condition of human nature*? that is to say, of a condition, at once harmonizing, in its real features, with the delineations of the *Old*, and with our experience of ourselves? It is contended that we do.

But here will be a proper place, under this position, (and especially with reference to one of

the propositions advanced in the third Lecture, concerning the permanence of evil in the world,) to digress somewhat from the natural course of the argument, in order to meet in advance an objection, which may present itself, to this effect. “ If the Gospel be an everlasting covenant, and “ a final revelation, and yet under *that* we per- “ sist in preaching man fallen, and the world “ corrupt, does not this difficulty follow; that “ *then* Christianity has within itself an intrinsic “ impediment to bar its way to universal recep- “ tion; to which nevertheless it aspires? For “ either eventual success in the improvement of “ mankind must nullify a great portion of Scrip- “ ture; or else, evil must be systematically re- “ tained, I do not mean, by ordinance and au- “ thority, but in the believer’s religious specula- “ tions and wishes, in order that its existence “ may be appealed to for the proof and for the “ accomplishment of that which is good.”

It is to be answered, that such objection proceeds upon a partial view of things. It virtually assumes that the experience of the future must remain the same, and the same *only*, with that which has already been. Thus it overlooks who are the parties in this matter; and thereby estimates the power of the Holy Spirit by the power of weak and fallible man.

It may not be in *us*: yet let it not be feared, but that *God will give an answer of peace* con-

Gen. xli.
16.

cerning such a question to as many as shall truly believe, and put their trust in him for it. In the mean time, *one* part of such an answer we may perceive *now*. It will be everlastingly true, that the *nature* of man is guilty and corrupt; and his past history, one of depravity and crimes. And as to the rest, shall it be doubted, that (to whatever excellence man may arrive by more diligent use of the revealed means of grace) He, who shall have visited us with that blessing of increased knowledge, unto holiness, will keep pace with his own mercies, in our apprehensions and in our hearts, by some proportionate increase of illumination, through his Holy Spirit? Nay, is a condition any way *supposable* by us (as many as believe) in which we could *help perceiving* at once the truth and certainty of both these things:—that “surely it *was* so with
 “ us once as the word of God hath spoken : yet
 “ though it were so no longer, we should under-
 “ stand that record to be not the less true : we
 “ should see that it had *not returned void* unto
 “ Him that sent it? It was through experience
 “ of evil that we found our way unto knowledge
 “ of the truth ; yet evil cannot be, inseparably,
 “ the bulwark of truth. For it would be matter of
 “ positive, sensible conviction to us, that, while
 “ somehow or other *evil* had disappeared, the
 “ *truth* stood.”

Cf. Isaiah
 lv. 11.

Such objection, therefore, is no real one, if the

view of truth be taken from the right point. But to stand without the gates of a city, and to refuse to enter in, and yet still to persevere in denying the existence of an internal economy of things within it, which we have never tried ; this is assuredly a partial sight. And all doubt resulting from it is to be rejected unreservedly and confidently, as not consistent with the most advanced state of apprehension and of reason, which man has it in his power to attain to, even in this present world. But to return to our detail^e.

In entering upon the continued contemplation of the same picture of man and human nature, as displayed in the New Testament ; there is to be noticed, what appears a very perceptible general change of surrounding impression ; such as might have been expected (and as we have before affirmed to be discoverable) in passing from a dispensation of the “flesh” to a dispensation of the “Spirit.” It is, as when a traveller has passed the gloom of a huge forest, and entered on a fair and champaign country. There are the same people as before, and the same passions ; but a freer light, and a purer air ; a soil more suitable to cultivation, and a less rugged surface ; intercourse, and civilization ;—causes such as these seem to have conspired to give them a more

Lect. ii. p.
48.

^e Let this reasoning be brought to comparison with the argument of Rom. iii. 3—8.

cheerful tone, through an increased knowledge. As the path becomes gradually smoother, so does the journey become pleasanter.

II. 1. Yet we have not changed realities. Let a first evidence be sought from the *narratives* of the New Testament.

Matt. xi.
16.

When the voice of the Son of man is heard, exclaiming; *Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.* Or again: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* Or again: *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*—we cannot but perceive the *dispositions* we have known before under the earlier covenant.

Luke xiii.
34.

Luke xviii.
24.

But these are only general correspondences of character, and looking backwards: let us be assured, from more specific instances, that the descriptions harmonize equally with daily passing experience.

1. Here, then, let a first example be taken from those traits of human nature incidentally appearing throughout the story of the woman taken in adultery, as related in the Gospel of St.

John. What can be more like the behaviour of ^{John viii. ad init.} that race, with whom we are ourselves acquainted, than the insidious temptation of our Saviour by the Scribes and Pharisees? the endeavour to ensnare a reprover, whom they could not put to shame? the ostentatious, but unreal, severity against that detected sin in others, of which they had overlooked the principle within themselves? What (on the other hand) more wisely consolatory to a spirit of sincere and contrite self-conviction, than the merciful indulgence of our Saviour?

He that abuses this affecting passage of divine Writ into a cloke for sin, abuses truth to his own undoing. But this is not a place to vindicate its tendency. It has been taken for a present example, not as affording any preeminent illustration of our general position; but because, having maintained its station in the canon of Scripture through severe questioning, it exhibits, in this very circumstance, so good a contrast between the ways and thoughts of *man*, in such particulars, and the *divine* ways and thoughts. Which shall we think knew best the nature and the wants of man,—the timidity, which, arguing from abuse, would have excluded this detail from its post of authority; or He, that said to the convicted sinner, *Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more?*

2. Again: to take an instance of a different

bearing :—it is real life that is described in the behaviour of the wife of Zebedee, in her request,
Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. Nor does it make material difference,

Matt. xx.
21.

Cf. Mark x.
35.

whether we suppose the sons applying for their own advancement, or the mother speaking for them. There is such a *reality* in the whole picture, that to draw forth the various points of its application closely must be forborne, from feelings of reverence. It would make Scripture sound almost like satire.

3. A like feeling forbids more than just the mention of a third, still quite different, example, to be found in that most natural and genuine description of the conduct, throughout, of the rioters at Ephesus, as narrated in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts xix.
21, ad fin.

But it may be said, “the character of a tumultuous popular assemblage is a very palpable one; and it needs no preternatural spirit to describe this.”

Most certainly it does not; nor do we maintain any such position. The position before us is, that we ourselves, and such as we, are the very persons whom Scripture speaks of; and to whom, as men, in every variety of persuasive form, it makes its condescending, though celestial, appeal. The point worthy of observation is, to note how a book of the description and the

compass which we have represented Scripture to be, possesses this versatility of power,—this eye, like that of a portrait, uniformly fixed upon us, turn where we will; to perceive how that very simplicity of form, for which in the *pride* of *theory* we should be disposed to reject it, becomes capable of being changed by the *humility* of *practice* into one of the surest sources of conviction. The thing to be digested, in faith, is this;—that in this singular volume, spoken, as it has been, *at sundry times and in divers manners*, by Prophets, Evangelists, Apostles, “there is nothing said of moral man, inconsistent with proved experience; nothing to which he, the subject of its trial, may not either from his lighter or more solemn observation of himself, bear testimony.”

II. 2. This has been illustrated from its *narratives*. The tendency of all its *practical doctrines* points the same way^f.

^f Perhaps it might be more correct to say, of its *doctrinal precepts*: but whatever phrase may be accepted as best expressing what is intended, I mean those precepts which are considered to be, and which certainly are, *peculiar* to Christianity, the “renouncing of the world,” the “preference of humility to honour,” the “forgiveness and love of enemies,” and such like: which are peculiar to Christianity in this sense,—that, though their truth, and excellence, and advantage, may be demonstrated by reason alone to every candid man’s sufficient conviction, yet are they so difficult in execution, and so essentially interwoven with the whole frame and spirit of the Gospel, that they cannot be accepted

And here it may be proper to notice (as it appears from the point of view at which we now are) an error of too pious zeal, which has occasioned offence to unbelievers. I mean that, by which too much has often been claimed for the *morality* of Christianity §.

I would not be understood to imply, that Christian morality has nothing distinctive and peculiar in it, even independently of its sanctions. But the cause of truth is not injured, or deserted, by foregoing a degree of claim which cannot be maintained. And it appears to me to be not only not disadvantageous to the evidence of Christianity, but altogether the contrary, that in its *mere moral code* it should have fallen in so much, as it has done, with preestablished authorities. It was *better* that so, *in all admissible things*, existing rights should have been respected by it; that the philosopher of the Gentiles

as practical principles of conduct, without the belief and inward consolation of Gospel doctrines.

§ An error, which has, I believe, been carried so far by some, as to induce them to claim, as a principle of conduct unknown before, the Christian maxim of *doing unto others as we would have them do unto us*. A claim this, which (without referring to other authorities) may be invalidated by these simple words of Isocrates; Ἄ πάσχοντες ὑφ' ἑτέρων ὀργίζεσθε, ταῦτα τοῖς ἄλλοις μὴ ποιεῖτε. (Nicocles. vol. i. p. 116. edit. Battie. 1749.) I am not aware what writer has advanced this injudicious demand, but mention it because it has been made a matter of complaint against the fairness of Christian advocates, within my own personal knowledge.

should have been enabled (notwithstanding the sentence passed upon his "wisdom") to recognize himself among the guests invited to the Christian feast; if he were but willing to come to it. It was better that he should have had the means of perceiving that He, who *knows what is in man*, was ready to accept both him, and all men, in Jesus Christ, *at the point at which he found them*. The event has proved that (after accepting the alliance of such human wisdom as is essentially imperishable) there is yet quite enough remaining, in the *sanctions and spiritual requisitions* of the Gospel, to establish its separate and superior authority;—quite enough to prove it divine; quite enough to convince the very strength of human reason of its ultimate weakness, without denying it its real possession of that, which surely it possessed before; much admirable sagacity, much that merited to be engrafted and preserved among the stock that is to last for ever: of which, therefore, indeed it could not have been deprived, without impeaching the justice of its Author.

Let the case be estimated in this manner: we renounce the philosopher (I mean the philosophic *unbeliever*) of our own times, as a brother under our *peculiar* inheritance. If he set up his own wisdom as sufficient to happiness, without the Gospel, it is clear he disinherits *himself*. But we do not, for this, renounce his wisdom *in its*

See Rom. i.
21, 22.
1 Cor. i. 19,
&c.

sterling and appropriate value. He has as much title, under our *general* inheritance, as we, or any man. It were vain to deny him to be lord of the very extremest compass of that wisdom, which recorded facts prove it to be possible for man, (I will not say, for I do not believe, *without* the help of grace, but for man,) at least *unconscious* of grace and revelation, to have attained to, and rejoiced in. As vain were it, as to deny that he possesses, bodily, “the discerning head, “and the servile feet; the thinking heart, and “the working hand.” We will travel with him, on our way, as far as we can; as far as he will go. It is not his stock of real knowledge that we require of him to surrender. If he will but submit to take our principles, we will gladly, thankfully, give him the right hand of fellowship altogether. We desire not to rob him of that property which, as it was the gift of God when first he came to us, so is it at the same Almighty disposal still. That shall be continued to his sole account. He, indeed, who will then have showed mercy, will purify and transform it into a talent fitted for his own use. But let not the man, who is thus freely called, therefore fear to trust his Maker! Much shall be added to his treasure, but nothing taken away. He shall *receive his own with usury*. If I may dare *so* to apply the Apostle’s language, Christianity does not ask of human knowledge that it should be *unclothed*,

Cf. Lect. iv.
p. 86—89.

Cf. Lect. ii.
p. 32.

Bishop
Taylor.

2 Cor. v. 4.

but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life;—the human, exalted and enlarged by the divine.

But to return to the question of those “practical doctrines, which are peculiar to Christianity.” Will not (it may be objected) our great argument, “that the revelation of the Gospel is adapted to the state of human nature,” be thus invalidated by the counter-argument, that its most important, because peculiar, precepts, are *contrary* to human nature?

No: the being contrary to human nature, in its unrenewed state, does not necessarily imply that human nature is incapable of complying with them under any assistance whatever. And the very fact of their unwelcomeness proves as much as is absolutely needed to support the consistency of our proposition. We do not say that human nature will not be *altered* by acceptance of, and conformity to, these precepts; interwoven inseparably as that acceptance and conformity will and must be with spiritual blessings: but we say, that the offer of them—the challenge to accept them—is made to *human nature as it is*. And this is enough to justify an argument, that there is perceptible, in every point of revelation, the hand and wisdom of a Revealer, who *knew what was in man*.

II. 3. We seek a further exemplification of our argument from our Saviour’s *parables*: and

as the proposition is more certain with respect to others, and will probably be admitted at first sight *there*, it shall the rather be grounded upon those which may be in part considered as *prophetical*, by reason of their describing the exact progress, or treatment, of the Gospel in the world.

But are these, predictions of the historical march and sufferance of the truth, *only*? records merely of the past, which have spent their strength in a solitary effort, and remain now but as heralds that have told their message? Or does not experience even constrain us to invest them with that perennial life, which heathen piety could attach to *only supposed* divine utterances?

Æschyl.
Sept. c.
Theb. 884.
ed. Blom-
field.

Θέσφατ' οὐκ ἀμβλύνεται.

And again,

τὰ δ' αἰεὶ

Soph. Cē-
dip. Tyr.
481-2. ed.
Brunck.

ζῶντα περιποτᾶται.

Matt. xiii.
24, &c.

Surely they are a sort of *standing prophecy*—permanent chronicles of human nature! The field, the good seed, the tares, the mixture suffered to remain unto the harvest—these are no ordinary likenesses—no definite enunciations, once appointed to be verified, but since daily fulfilled only by accident! Again: the marriage feast, the general invitation, not given until *all things were now ready*, the shifting and hypocritical excuses, and finally the intrusion of unfit

Matt. xxii.
1, &c.
Luke xiv.
16, &c.

guests after all—these cannot be mere protests, and records of condemnation, against the Jews ; but general, and recurring, and pregnant testimonies of the case between the Almighty and his people, through all the generations of those, who, on the failing of the natural branches through unbelief, were grafted in by faith^h.

Rom. xi.
19, 20.

II. 4. To proceed to another part of Scripture—consider the profound insight into human nature perceptible throughout the Epistles of St. Paul. But let our more especial reference be made, here, to such passages as describe the va-

^h If it were not so, if we found ourselves prohibited from using these very significant and touching representations to the better understanding and the improving of our spiritual condition, and were told that we had no business with them in that way, though they served a general purpose in our favour ; we might well adapt to our feelings the pathetic appeal of the poet, in his “ Complaint ” on a different subject :

“ Now, for this consecrated Fount,
 “ Of murm’ring, sparkling, living love,
 “ What have I? shall I dare to tell?
 “ A comfortless, and hidden well.
 “ A well of love—it may be deep—
 “ I trust it is, and never dry :
 “ What matter? if the waters sleep
 “ In silence and obscurity.
 “ Such change, and at the very door
 “ Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.”

And let our quotation of this be received as a testimony with what community of spirit we embrace all subsidiary processes of natural wisdom, power, and beauty, and apply them to the illustration and joint establishment of truth.

rious abuses under which the Church should, in succeeding ages, suffer, through corruptions of its disciples and teachers. I do not refer to such

1 Tim. iv. 1. a passage as that wherein he says, *The Spirit speaketh expressly*, but to those which seem to have a general aspect; as where he regrets the necessity of *heresies*, or mentions the impatience
1 Cor. xi. 19. of *sound doctrine*, which should arise; or describes the sort of teachers, which should creep
2 Tim. iv. 3. into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts: these are not merely things which *we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us*,—they are true, in that respect as well as in every other,—but because we have *seen*, we have believed them.

Now what answer shall be made to this? “That St. Paul was a subtle rhetorician, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and therefore knew all artificial modes of attack and defence; and so, fortified his system by anticipating evils in themselves not unlikely to befall?” The supposition implies that, in regard to Christianity, he was an impostor. Wherefore, its refutation may safely be referred to the general state of the argument on this point. What other interpretation, then, besides the true, shall be put upon it? There is none. St. Paul’s anticipation of darker times is only to be accounted for, rationally, by the belief that he spoke under influ-

ence and direction of a Spirit that *knew*, really, *what was in man*.

One further example only shall be brought, from a circumstance which conveys a most affecting evidence of truth to the heart, and which is so little like the manner of men; from that beautiful and merciful acceptance of divers conditions and capacities in the cause of God, which is so marked a feature of the New Testament. Cf. Lect. viii. I. §. 1, 2, 3. In proof of which let present appeal be made only to the tenor of St. Paul's language in the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians: since it is upon the recognition of so much difference of *capacity*, rather than of *condition*, that the inference shall be grounded. Cf. Lect. i. p. 7—10, &c.

It may be said, perhaps, that this twelfth chapter of Corinthians only concerns certain varieties of *miraculous* power in the primitive Church.

Be it so, that in its first and strict application it does. But when I see that in the Church miraculous powers of every sort have long since ceased altogether; that an equable and proportionate change has happened to its whole body, something analogous, in its effect, to *the softening of a picture*; that *learning* has thus stepped in, to supply, in such measure as it may, the place of *inspiration*; (whence, at this day, they within the Church that are mighty in learning are accounted and honoured as its foremost defenders;) that some are rich in eloquence, and in

the might of touching the affections; that others, again, abound in cool and sober judgment, and have their access to good through the understanding; that some can only prevail by simplicity and fervent piety, seeing they are debarred from all outward advantages; that every minister of Christ (in short) at this day, has his own measure of ability; and one has *this* gift, and another *that*; when I see things like these, I look to Scripture for a clew to unravel the appearance of them, and seem to find it *here*: *All these things worketh one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

1 Cor. xii.
11.

But when, beyond this point, I look again on this same present Church, and see, in instances almost innumerable, (as of old,) these gifts set in invidious array, one against another; *learning* much too apt to speak contemptuously of *piety*, and *piety* as much too ready to pass censorious verdict upon *learning*; those, whose strength is in the *understanding* charging such as appeal to the *affections* with *enthusiasm*; and these retorting, in their turn, a hasty reproach of *lukewarmness and indifference*; all (as it would appear) from want of duly appreciating and honouring the necessity and assistance of either to other; and when, at the close of such a chapter, I hear the Apostle saying, *Yet show I unto you a more excellent way*,—and that way is CHARITY; then it becomes sure, that the chapter is

1 Cor. xii.
31. and ch.
xiii.

for us, and for our children, of some power towards effectual holiness; though we were neither Apostles, nor workers of signs and wonders, but only doorkeepers in the house of our God.

Ps. lxxxiv.
10.

But it is necessary to pause upon a theme, which is inexhaustible. If the position taken in the outset has been, thus far, made good; if the exemplifications of it do really and fairly serve to their intended purpose; if Scripture does indeed thus show us to ourselves, and we cannot deny the truth of the resemblance; if it neither conceals deformity, to tempt us, nor yet drives us into extremity, so as to overwhelm us; if it neither threatens, nor promises too much; could it have proceeded either from one that did not *know* us, or from one that did not *love* us?

There is yet another general view of its adaptation to the real state of human nature remaining to be taken, before we come to speak of its sufficiency for *individual* cases; which view is to be seen in *the characteristic speech and conduct of its successive ambassadors*, both under the elder and the later dispensation. This, which offers a topic of much interesting reflection, will form the subject of the next Lecture.

the first of these is the fact that the
the second is the fact that the

the third is the fact that the

the fourth is the fact that the

the fifth is the fact that the

the sixth is the fact that the

the seventh is the fact that the

the eighth is the fact that the

the ninth is the fact that the

the tenth is the fact that the

LECTURE VI.

JOHN ii. 25.

For he knew what was in man.

WE proceed to the last exemplification proposed of this particular position in the text; as it is to be inferred, concerning holy Scripture, “from
“ the *manner of speech* and *general character* of
“ its successive ambassadors both under the elder
“ and the later covenant.”

If the preceding statements, which have been advanced, be in any measure sound and just; if holy Scripture be truly represented as one continuous appeal from the Almighty to his creatures, made *at sundry times and in divers manners* to the same human nature; we shall expect, according to that harmony of colouring, that *proportion* which may reasonably be looked for, in a volume of inspired and everlasting truth, to find a suitable difference perceptible in the points above mentioned. We shall not look for exactly the same *character and manner of address* to their hearers, in the “Prophets,” in “our Lord,” and in his “Apostles.” We shall look, indeed, for *consistency of spirit* in all; and

See Luke
ix. 53.
Cf. Hebr.
xii. 22.

John iv. 37.

expect all to have their *faces set* the same way, *as though they would go towards Jerusalem*; (agreeably to that which our Saviour has himself represented; *And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth*; the field of labour must be *one*;) but, *with* this, we may reckon upon finding their respective methods of procedure influenced by the consciousness of delegated power in each, and by the extent of their entrusted commissions.

1 Kings
xviii. 24.
&c.

Luke ix.
54, 55, 56.

For example; when Elijah challenged the worshippers of Baal to the trial by fire, he knew well that his appeal would be answered from on high. He acted suitably to his commission; and the effect he desired was produced, at least, for the time. But when the Apostles James and John would have had recourse to a like demonstration, it stands on record, that they knew not the Spirit of the dispensation whereunto they were called. How much less could *we* expect to convince others, by appealing *now* to powers, which we could not command! or how could Scripture commend itself effectually to the reason and the conscience at once, if we found it countenancing any reference to present visible terrors, which we know, from the analogy of settled experience, to be no longer executed! A law, which should thus invalidate its own authority, would certainly fail of proof, that it “knew “what was in him, for whom it was intended.”

Do, then, the successive commissioners of the divine purpose for man's redemption (that is to say, the "Prophets," as its *harbingers*; our "Lord" himself, as its *Author and Finisher*; the "Apostles," whose writings have descended to us, as its *Interpreters under immediate inspiration*) severally speak, and conduct themselves in such manner and proportion, as seems consistent and reasonable? like teachers taking men as they were at the season of their respective ministries; directing their efforts according to the power and commission with which they felt themselves invested; and leaving provision for things to come, with reference to practical possibilities?—That they should do so, seems to be "nature;" and nature (in such sense) may be pronounced one evidence of wisdom and of truth^a.

^a It is very possible, that this proposition may not meet with general assent. But, however this may be, I would not, at any rate, be supposed to lay such stress upon a view, which may be altogether fanciful, as essentially to implicate the truth of Scripture in its failure, if erroneous. It is not meant to attribute positive intention and studied arrangement to the penmen of the sacred Volume, in such particulars. The consciousness of "inspiration" forms a state, and a measure of knowledge, of which we can form no worthy notion: and it were therefore lost labour, not to say presumption, to speculate upon it.

But if, according to that which we *do* know and *can* estimate, according to the most ingenious and solid distributions of *human art*, we now can perceive the general volume of holy

We will first, then, state what appears to *be* the characteristic manner of address, severally, of the "Prophets;" of "our Lord," and of the "Apostles;" and secondly, consider each with reference to the position of the present Lecture.

I. 1. The characteristic manner of the "Prophets" (that is to say, of *all* the expressly commissioned teachers under the Old Testament) may be dismissed very briefly. That in
 1 Pet. i. 12. their *prophetic* office they spake as men *unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things* which they testified, will not be disallowed. It is, however, their *didactic* manner which more concerns the present question. And as to this, they spake and taught always like men personally conscious of *direct influence*, and strong only by virtue of *recurring communication* with the power whose instruments they were. Without distinction and special revelation, they seem

Writ comprising, as though by very force of its materials, each *form* of proof that seems most acceptable, and most convincing to man, on *other* subjects, (cf. Aristot. Rhet. b. 1. c. 2. §. 3.) it will be something, to discover more familiarly—I will not say that "divine truth is, after all, the best rhetoric;" (it does not want that praise, and cannot receive honour from it;) but "how our study of an excellent art may be made profitable, and the art itself be honoured, by being rendered subservient to the illustration of "divine truth."

not to have spoken at all ^b. Their tone is rather abrupt and minatory, than gentle and persuasive. They speak like preachers under a system of more immediate and visible impressions. Their appeal is more to “fear,” than to “love.” Not that there are *no* exceptions; but this is their *prevailing* manner. “Fear” is unquestionably the motive of the Old Testament. It seems as though the constitution of human nature required that it should be so. It was necessary, to the illustration in due season of the dispensation of “love.” It is not extinguished, even under that, until love be *perfect*. As we spoke Cf. 1 John iv. 18. before of a *reciprocation* between the “Law” and the “Gospel,” in respect of their “end” and Lect. ii. p. 45. “means;” so may a like interchange be discovered here, between the “rule” and the “exception” of their severally prevailing manners of address. In the Old Testament, *terror* forms the *rule*, and *tenderness* the *exception*; in the New, it is *terror* which appears to be the *exception*, and *tenderness* the *rule*.

I. 2. The case of “our Lord” himself, on earth, is quite *peculiar*; and as before it none

^b This might be inferred from what is said in the third chapter of the first book of Samuel. *The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* (v. 1.) But it is only necessary to refer to their express formal introductions; as, *Thus saith the Lord*; or, *The word of the Lord which came*, &c. and such like phrases.

was ever like unto it, neither shall be any hereafter, we might be perplexed, if a corresponding peculiarity were not discernible in his *manner* and *character*.

Collect for
second
Sunday
after
Easter.

John iii.
31, 34, 35.

For he came not as a minister and ambassador *alone*; *these* do not complete his pretensions, even as a *teacher*: (setting aside, for a while, his *included* purpose, to be “an ensample of godly “life.”) He was not merely the *herald*, but (if I may so speak) himself the evident *proprietor* of a more perfect commission; announced by his forerunner, in terms as distinctive and express as the following. *He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.*

Here is evidently the character of a person of more perfect “authority;” of one, who (how strictly soever he might unite with his unequal yoke-fellows in all concern for man’s conviction; and so far speak, persuade, and admonish, as they had done, and were to do) yet stands distinguished above all, by a manifestation of *conscious independence* belonging to himself alone.

Now that our “Lord” was distinguished in character and manner from the “Prophets,” as

it needs no proof, and is not of so much weight towards the object of the whole comparison, is a point that shall not be dwelt upon. But the quality of distinction here meant between himself and his chosen *servants* in *the Gospel*, demands a further illustration; which shall be given, first, from instances wherein they have *spoken of the same thing*.

1. Compare, then, our Saviour, saying, *Woe* Matt. xxiii. 29, 31, 32, 33.
unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! Ye
be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the
children of them which killed the prophets. Fill
ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye ser-
pents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape
the damnation of hell ? with St. Paul, writing—
The Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus, and 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15, 16.
their own prophets, and have persecuted us ; and
they please not God, and are contrary to all
men : forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that
they might be saved, to fill up their own sins
alway : for the wrath is come upon them to the
uttermost. That tone, which is judicial in the
one passage, seems rather sorrowful and pathetic
in the other. Nor does St. Stephen (though
much nearer the judicial spirit than St. Paul)
go the full length of declaring the conclusion to
which his protest led, in his defence before the Acts vii. 51, 52, 53.
Jewish council ^c.

^c Compare, again, our Lord's description of the " day of judgment," (Matt. xxv. 31—46.) with St. Paul's lan-

2. Look, next, at an instance of *personal behaviour*.

John xix.
10, 11.

Pilate said unto our Saviour, *Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee ?* Jesus answered, *Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.* After which, hear St. Paul, before Festus ; *If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die : but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.* There is, perhaps, no more *fear of death* in one of these cases, than in the other ; but there is a very different *consciousness of power* implied in the respective answers^d.

Acts xxv.
11.

guage, in 2 Cor. v. 10, 11 ; or with St. Peter's, (2 Epist. iii.) or with St. Jude, (which is, perhaps, the most *peremptory* in its character, of any apostolic writing in the Canon ;) there will be perceivable, I think, an air of " authority " in the original *declaration*, very different from the features of those *arguments, which rest but upon its sanction.*

^d Or, again, compare John xi. 8, 9. with St. Paul's manner of speaking in 1 Thess. ii. 18. The language of Philippians i. 25. may seem to militate against the inference here intended ; and therefore deserves to be referred to. But I think, when considered attentively, it will be found to be of no dissimilar character ; either the confidence which the Apostle there feels of abiding with his Philippian flock is, in fact, conditional, though peremptorily expressed ; (in which case it seems built on the persuasion of its being advan-

3. Let another exemplification or two of our Lord's peculiar character be taken, without any comparison; as it is incidentally pourtrayed only, not with any seeming design.

And first, as to his absolute and perfect *intuition*: look at his interview with Nathanael. When Nathanael (convinced by what had passed John i. 49, 50. between them before) had made confession: *Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel; Jesus answered and said unto him; Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.* He speaks of that knowledge, which impressed his hearer with so much astonishment, as a merely familiar^e and natural possession of his own: nor only that; but as an inferior and ordinary part of his abundant store.

Observe a like evidence of the *natural fullness* of all *power* in our Saviour, as it appears through the cure of the man sick of the palsy, as related in the ninth chapter of St. Matthew's

tageous to them that he *should* so abide, mixed up with a general interpretation of the will of God;) or that conjecture must be just, which attributes it to a *particular revelation*. See Doddridge on the place.

^e Pascal, Thoughts, xiv. "Jesus Christ speaks of the sublimest subjects in a manner as simple as if he had never considered them; but nevertheless his expressions are so exact, as to show that he had thoroughly weighed them. Such accuracy, with such simplicity, is admirable." ("Cette clarté jointe à cette naïveté est admirable.")

Cf. Mark
ii. 5—13.
Luke v.
18—25.

Gospel. Our Lord had chosen to convey his cure in the words, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.* But when certain of the Scribes began to say within themselves, *This man blasphemeth; Jesus knowing their thoughts said; Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? for whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then saith he to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.* I think it is impossible not to be struck with *this* narrative. He not only shows his power here, but he shows an unrivalled, an infinite ease in the exertion of it. For he lets his enemies themselves, as it were, choose the way in which it should be manifested; signifying, that with *him* this made no difference.

To a somewhat different operation of the same *inward confidence*, (still discovering itself naturally,) why should we not attribute that singular action, related in the chapter from whence the text is taken? I mean, the driving out the buyers and sellers from the temple^f. Our Saviour's sense of *right and proprietorship* in the

^f This action of our Saviour has been much and irreverently calumniated. As to its probable *motive*, I do not see why the explanation of it implied in the Homily, "On the right use of the Church," should not be cheerfully acquiesced in; especially as it is justified by the quotation,

temple may be inferred from the incident of the *tribute money*, as it befel at Capernaum. Consider the transaction now before us in the light proposed; and it is, at least, an instructive (and consolatory) instance of worldly strength abashed and confounded before the simple might of spiritual authority, not blindly exceeding its commission, but estimating rightly its own resources, and knowing *what is in man* ^ε.

Matt. xvii.
24—27.

Such, we think, is the scriptural delineation (in part) of our Saviour's character, as the Founder and Lord of the Gospel dispensation. Let it not be forgotten, because (as will appear) it is of inseparable importance in measuring the *propriety* of his whole character, that he is nevertheless represented, all the while, in the form and likeness of perfect man.

I. 3. We come, thirdly, to the characteristics of the "Apostles," as they are to be collected from the New Testament.

The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. May it not at once illustrate, and stand illustrated by St. Paul's precept to the Ephesians (iv. 26.) *Be ye angry, and sin not?*

^ε Perhaps we may refer to this same head (for a still further elucidation, over and above all of other kinds that have been advanced for their correct development) those miracles of our blessed Lord, "the destruction of the herd of "swine," and "the cursing of the barren fig tree;" by considering them as acts of *plenary power*, exercised *absolutely*, but *not wantonly*, by one, who felt all nature to be at his command; and knew what diversities of proof man needed, to his full conviction, for his greatest and eternal good.

And what is it we meet with here? Taking our view from *simple apprehension* and *general impression*, I think it must be answered; “Some-thing quite distinct from either precedent, in the form of their appeal to us; though in exact unison as to the aim—of bringing us to be holy, and just, and good.” There is neither the *denunciatory* tone of the Prophets, nor yet the peculiar, *unequivocal authority* of their divine Master. They speak, in greater degree than either, as teachers, giving *reasons* for what they recommend: not like men holding out immediate terrors, or looking for instant and palpable effects; but as the stewards of a milder dispensation might be expected to speak; more under the influence of a *general hope*, and with more *variety* of manner; vehemently or patiently, earnestly or sorrowfully, as the occasion may require: not *temporizing*^h, (as we use the word, in a bad sense,) or betraying fear, or compromising their commission; no: strong and confident of truth, in the spirit, as strength and confidence can be; but still, like persons presuming that they spoke to hearers possessed of a spiritual discernment also. I do not mean, in such manner or degree, as to justify an inference, that,

^h The various reading of Romans xii. 11. καίρω (for κυρίω) θαλεύοντες, will hardly be objected here. Even supposing it to be the true reading, it has evidently another force.

seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of ^{Numb. xvi. 3.}
them, and the Lord is among them; therefore, all
 spiritual subordination is to be rejected. Very
 far otherwise. But they appear to *respect* the
 personal rights of their disciples, as fit subjects
 to be strictly put upon *their own responsibility*;
 and therefore (we presume, by permission and
 influence of the Divine Comforter) they seem
 to *condescend*, and to *entreat*, more than any
 who had taught before them: not as if they
had dominion over their disciples' faith, but were ^{2 Cor. i. 24.}
helpers of their joy. They speak like per- ^{Cf. 1 Pet. v. 3.}
 sons unwilling to proceed to severities. Wit- ^{1 Cor. iv. 14.}
 ness that tender language of St. Paul, even
 where compelled to hold out threatening; *What* ^{Ver. 21.}
will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in
love, and in the spirit of meekness: and again;
I beseech you, that I may not be bold, when I ^{2 Cor. x. 2.}
am present, with that confidence wherewith I think
to be bold against some, which think of us, as if
we walked according to the flesh. They indicate ^{2 Cor. vi.}
 a full sense of being themselves exposed to scru-
 tiny; not concealing (or rather, openly confess-
 ing, as though they never thought any thing
 else) their natural fellowship in human weak-
 ness; and, by consequence, exercising an appro-
 priate modesty, and prudent *discretion*. I re-
 peat, they seem quite sure of their divine com-
 mission; fully prepared to give account of their
 stewardship; and declaring it to be *a small* ^{1 Cor. iv. 3.}

thing, that they should be judged of man's judgment : and yet, they treat the reasonable consciences of men, under grace, as fit subjects unto which to make appeal. I speak, says St. Paul, as to wise men ; judge ye what I say.

1 Cor. x.
15.

II. I forbear to multiply characteristics. Our groundwork being thus sufficiently prepared, let us proceed to consider the distinctions thus delineated with reference to the position of the present Lecture. Let us examine, whether these peculiarities, severally attributed to a succession of inspired ministers, the stewards all of one continuous scheme, do indeed appear so well adapted to the quality and spirit of their respective dispensations, as to support our inference, that “ there appears, through them, the progressive method of a wisdom, which knew “ what was in man.”

Now, the plan I shall adopt for ascertaining whether the characters of these successive administrators of “ revelation” were suited to their purpose, shall be, not to suppose ourselves in the place of Jews who lived three thousand years ago ; or of Christians, in the days when they *were so called first at Antioch ;* and so, to imagine fictitious cases, for persons whom we *cannot* personate ; but to review these several particularities, *as they present themselves to us,* and to our own spiritual faculties, (wherein our trial lies,) *at this day.*

Acts xi. 26.

Cf. Lect.
vii. ad
init.

Lect. ii.

II. 1. Consider, then, in this light, the *manner* of the "Old" Testament, first. Dismiss the parts that are really obsolete; the national and Levitical *proprieties*, and the mere localities; and refer only to the features that are permanent; to the qualities of our forefathers as *men*; to the heart, the spirit, and the passions, speaking through their personal conduct: and thus (for we have already seen that the *same* heart, Lectt. iv. v. and spirit, and passions are *our own*) consider it as addressing *our own state of religious infancy*.

I do not mean a state through which we have all *actually* and literally *passed*, or of which we are likely to obtain an *apprehension*, in equal degrees. In fact, *any* apprehension of it is an attainment altogether "spiritual;" and therefore will (of course) depend on many varieties of circumstance; upon the manner in Cf. John vii. 17. which we have kept or broken our baptismal covenant; upon the extent, (in consequence,) and length of time, during which we have *distinctly understood our deliverance* from such a condition, by having *personally* and heartily *accepted* of the faith and understanding that come by JESUS CHRIST. *Not*, therefore, (I say,) a state, through which we have passed actually and literally; but *by proxy*, as it were, and *spiritually*: of which, if we *do* stand firm in the faith, and hope, and knowledge that come by

the revelation of the Gospel, an apprehension will be present, and remain with us of *this* nature; that it is “a condition from whose essential bondage *we* now stand exempted by virtue of that purer faith, and better hope, and fuller knowledge only.” A state, now become representative for ever, of *this* predicament; “of man, possessed of a perfect knowledge that *God is*, and demands obedience, and is angry against sin; *without* an equally certain knowledge of a life to come, and of an atonement, or *sure* channel of reconciliation, for offences incurring that displeasure.” A state likewise declarative for ever, of the “extent of natural corruptness, under control of imperfect motives; and of the absolute inability of wrath and terror, and of all immediate, *visible* manifestations to effect that change in it, which, by our mere natural apprehension, we cannot but suppose they *must* have effected.” A state, of which the last and best, and highest confession comes to the acknowledgment; *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Lect. ii.
p. 36—42.

Rom. vii.
24.

Cf. 1 Cor.
xiii. 11.

I will add, a condition, in which (or in something *equivalent* to which) as many as are not *men* in Christ, and have not *put away childish things*, must yet continue; and towards which the very strongest must at least *be conscious* of a natural gravitation, so often as their

passions triumph, and their faith is for a season obscured. I will not say, that by such failings any are thrown back *into it, out of* the protecting pale of their own happier privileges, unless the failure happen by deliberate choice; neither would I affirm that any *may not* be thrown back into it, or into a *worse* estate, entirely. But (which is enough at present) I contend, that believers must feel themselves acquainted with the *secret* of such a state; they will comprehend what is meant by it; the descriptions of it will find entrance into their own bosoms.

Cf. Heb. vi.
4, 5, 6.

Cf. Psalm
xxv. 14.

Consider, then, the *manner* of the “Law and “of the Prophets” with *this personal interest*; and *then* put it on its trial, as adapted to the nature of man. And as there is nothing in the *matter* of the earlier Scripture which we would *now* desire to find omitted, seeing to what awfully important purposes *all* is subservient; so, we think, it will be acknowledged of its *manner* of instruction, that nothing can be better calculated for its purpose, than *this* is. While there is *enough* of love and mercy found in it to forbid despair, and to point at intervals to *better things to come*; we may rejoice, that its prevailing tone is of another character; of a character, that clearly shows the offended, more than the returning Father; that makes us indeed hate sin, and fear its consequences, and tremble for ourselves. For,

Cf. Lect. v.
pp. 120-1.
and Lect iv.
ad fin.

Cf. Heb. x.

Cf. Lect. iii.
§. 3. §. 4.

Rom. vii.
13.

Ps. cxxxix.
19.

Cf. Rom.
iii. 31.

vi. 1.

would we be *deceived* in our calculation of the anger of the Almighty against *sin*? would we wish to think that it is *not exceeding sinful*? is there not something within, which, sooner or later in the question, *must* bring us to the Psalmist's reflection; *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God*? When it is the most obvious (and, if just, would be a fatal) objection to the more merciful dispensation of the Gospel, that *through faith the law of duty is made void*; when, *as it is*, many are unhappily led into the error of *continuing in sin, that grace may abound*; how shall we think it *might* be, if there were no severer authorized language of denunciation against sin, to which we might refer in the cases of obstinate and rebellious children, under the covenant of grace!

Psal. lxxxv.
10.

Psal. lxxvii.
9, 10.

I pray, that we may never be ensnared to think *so* of the Gospel, as that "justice" is therein *superseded* by "mercy." It is the *union* of the two together, which the Gospel manifests; not the *substitution* of the one for the other. Let the Psalmist's words be kept in perpetual remembrance as a true character of it; *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* As David, a true Israelite, under the "dispensation of fear" thus argued; *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most*

High; so may a true Christian check the current of *presumptuous* thought under the “ministry of love;” “Hath God forgotten to be *just*, that I should continue in sin? No; an enemy hath raised this thought: but I will remember the things of old time, *which were written for my* Cf. 1 Cor. x. 11.
“*admonition.*”

We have to consider, whether, under *this* view, the *manner* of the “Law and the Prophets” indicates a *knowledge of man*.

II. 2. But to come to “our Saviour’s” *manner and character*, as connected with our position. Do these, as represented in the Gospel, (or rather I should say, as here conceived and assumed to be represented in the Gospel,) come home to our experience also, as being *suitable*, according to the terms proposed?

In entering upon this consideration, let it be again remarked, that, to estimate the points in question properly, we must have recourse to the same sort of contemplation as before. We must contemplate them only for *our own* satisfaction, and with *our own knowledge*, from that elevated point of light and evidence, at which Christians now stand. If we look to the immediate apprehensions which seem to have prevailed among the very people to whom our Saviour spake, we shall obtain a very inadequate conception of the fitness for its end, either of his instruction, or of his example. His manner of

See as ex-
amples,
Matt. xvi.
5—12.
John viii.
33 to the
end.

John vii.
39.

speech was frequently misapprehended; his *character* was not then fully developed. All that language of the Gospels, in itself *apparently* at variance, which is now to us familiarly reconciled by the doctrine of “two natures” in our Lord, must of necessity have worn a *very* mysterious (not to say, unintelligible) aspect *then* when *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified*. We cannot, however, for a moment doubt, that *evidence enough* was offered for conviction, to a generation who beheld the *signs and wonders* of the great Deliverer with their own eyes. The question for *ourselves* to weigh is this: whether contemplating our Saviour under both those views, in which we *must* contemplate him, in order to appreciate his claims worthily, (that is to say, both as the “Minister and Proprietor at “once of a new dispensation,” and also as “a “friend and brother, himself the *great exemplar* “of life and conduct to all his followers, for “ever,”) the *style of his teaching*, (in the first instance,) and his *personal behaviour*, (in the second,) appear adapted to the ends of his sojourn upon earth, to us, living now in the fulness of light?

1. With respect to his manner of *speaking* and *teaching*, it cannot be necessary to say much. If the characteristic traits by which he stands distinguished as a teacher were correctly

displayed in a former part of this Lecture, a pp. 151—7.
 conclusion of the suitableness of *this* to its proposed object follows almost spontaneously. Surely, his way of speech is perceptibly the very voice of the *bridegroom* himself. His precepts John iii. 29. and aphorisms are unembarrassed, clear, and positive; his discoveries are what we wanted; enough, and no more. He has rebuke for the hypocrite and the oppressor, and comfort for the penitent. To those who *saw* him, his works bore witness to his words, when he called Cf. John xiv. 11. them to a saving faith. For *ourselves*, and all as many as have never eaten and drunk in his personal presence, and in whose streets he never taught, he has left a comprehensive, and sufficient, and perpetually descending consolation; *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have* John xx. 29. *believed.*

But I forbear to tarry on this topic. Let it be referred, rather, to the thoughts suggested concerning it by a powerful advocate for the truth of Christianity, in some of his chapters on Paley, vol. ii. ch. 2, 3, 4, 5. its “auxiliary evidences.” Surely, every thing there set forth relative to Christ, when honestly compared with our own experience, bespeaks him to be one, on whom we may *rely* with perfect security; the very “lord now gone for a Cf. Matth. xxv. 14. “season into a far country,” who has portioned out his goods among us, and will one day come and reckon with us! And is not *this* the very precise

conviction which it most concerns our happiness to feel?

2. A question of greater doubt and difficulty is, whether the second and subordinate object of his incarnation (namely, the exhibiting a perfect human example for our imitation) is accomplished with equal *appropriateness*?

I call it a question of *greater doubt and difficulty*, because it is quite impossible, in sincere seeking after truth, and of our duty, as resulting from truth, not to be sensible of *this* perplexity; “that the pattern thus propounded for our imitation, and declared to be the likeness we *must* “aspire after, is one that neither *is*, nor *ever has* “*been* perfectly imitated.” *For there is no man that sinneth not* : whereas it is both evident *incidentally*, concerning CHRIST, as well as affirmed *positively*, that he was *without sin*. Hence it becomes a feeling of unsubdued nature, or of premature despair, that “Christ’s example is “not *imitable*.” An insuperable objection, if it were a sound one, to the present argument! since an example, really not imitable, could never have been held out, as this is, in Scripture, if Scripture be (as we contend) the work of a spirit and a wisdom that “knows man” thoroughly ⁱ.

1 Kings
viii. 46.

Heb. iv. 15.

ⁱ This difficulty might be met and obviated by an inquiry, in what the *imitation* of our Saviour truly consists. Under which head, I take for granted that no fair and

But a true understanding of revealed religion seems to include (not to say, consist in) the honest reconciling—I mean, the reconciling not through dotage or self-imposition, but in reason and in conscience—of certain paradoxes of this description ; namely, of which either part separately so cogently approves itself to the natural reason, as not to be gainsaid without violence thereto offered : of which, again, both parts are found to coexist practically, without the least contradiction ; in which, nevertheless, there is so much seeming contrariety, when submitted to the mere intellect, as abstract propositions, that the acceptance of, and hearty acquiescence in them, as certain and consistent truths, is a work of faith alone. And of these paradoxes it appears to be one, that “an example found by experience never to have been imitated, is yet presented as the only true standard of universal imitation^k.”

reasonable person will refuse to allow, that it *must* consist, not in the performance of specific actions, corresponding with the actions of Christ ; but in a general conformity to his temper and spirit, to be exercised in that condition of life, in which it has pleased God to place us. Not however to stand upon this ground, it seems better to acknowledge the perplexity above represented, that it is a real one ; and to meet it as such.

^k Perhaps the greatest of all these paradoxes is that which relates to the subject of the source and possession of faith, to the propositions, severally and conjointly, that faith is “a gift of God alone,” and yet “a faculty within every Christian’s

Nor, when this is so affirmed, does the burden rest with the Christian preacher to explain and account for all that manifold aberration from its standard, which the Christian world displays; but it rests with the objector, to point out any particulars, in which the merely human conduct of our Lord is *not* imitable, under assistance of the Spirit of grace.

Look at any of the more familiar and less strictly official actions of our Lord: can any thing be more evident, *in point of fact*, than that he accepts men as his "brethren," speaks to them as such, treats them as such? But a single text may suffice for present illustration; *John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He*

Matt. xi.
18, 19.

"power of attainment, to whom Christ is preached faithfully;" in effect, the compatibility of grace and free-will. It is not within the scope of the present work to discuss any such question; but as it is a rock of offence, upon which (as it appears to me) every honest estimate of our condition, as responsible subjects of the Christian revelation, must painfully fall, sooner or later, I take this opportunity of remarking, with reference by anticipation to the topic of the succeeding Lecture, that I should not venture upon the assumption therein made,—I should not think that holy Scripture *did* meet, and satisfy the wants and wishes of every *individual* whom it calls unto obedience, if he could not, from the above considerations, reconcile comfortably to his own heart such apparent inconsistencies, although in words he cannot do so. We may reconcile any thing after a precise and formal pattern of man's prescription, by settling decrees, and calling them "divine;" and thus imagine that all perplexity is ended: but then, what becomes of the *universality* of Scripture?

hath a devil: the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: but wisdom is justified of her children.

What kind of character is depicted here?

So complete, indeed, is our Lord's *humanity*, depicted in the Gospels, as one *made like unto* Heb. ii. 17. *his brethren*, that, as we read, we cannot help, in common matters, joining ourselves to him in that character. Some undefinable impression may grow up in our hearts, calculated to prepare us for higher sentiments *by and by*, when further light is superadded; our *hearts may burn within* Luke xxiv. 32. *us by the way*; yet do we proceed, and converse with him as a *companion*, in his merely human conduct, as freely as the disciples journeying to Emmaus did, before he became known to them as *the Lord*, by a religious act. If I may be allowed so to employ an expression rendered more sacred by a different usage, for a season we quite feel ourselves to be "one with him, and
" he with us."

Office for
the Holy
Communion.

We must, therefore, seek interpretation of the melancholy fact, that such an example is not imitated, from other sources than those of inconsistency, or failure of truth, in Scripture. Our Lord's example, as represented there, (in relation to the points now before us,) is not only strictly *human*, and therefore strictly *imitable*; but it displays a model, in the precise points

where a model was wanted; in the union of humanity with holiness; of tenderness and indulgence towards frailty, with the maintenance of unerring righteousness; in defining every excellence that is *real*, *beneficial*, and *permanent*, as contradistinguished from such as are *artificial* only, selfish, and contingent. Let the question only be proposed fairly;—"Would we *desire* to "have a character exhibited to us, for such purpose and under such circumstances, less perfect than this is?"—Infinitely removed as a disciple must feel himself, at the very uttermost and highest stage of his progression, from the fulness of his Lord's perfection; still would he accept or admit the pattern, as one adapted to universal use, if it *were* tinged with any infirmity?

II. 3. Contemplate, then, the position wherein we now stand, in approaching to view the character and manner of the *apostolical* writings.

We have arrived at this posture of religious knowledge. The wound of our nature has been laid bare; the hatefulness of sin, and the weight of divine wrath against it, fearfully revealed. The sacrifice of reconciliation also is offered; the certainty of a life to come, established; a general invitation of mercy is given; the "new commandment" of "love," delivered; and a pattern of *restored* nature set before us, as our object of imitation, and our guide. Let it be presumed that we

assent to the likeness of ourselves, in all that is past; that we acknowledge the Law to be meant for ourselves; that we cannot deny the example set before us, though so pure, to be still an human one; and though it has never been attained to, yet to be *attainable* by man.

Yet what are we? creatures fearing and abhorring sin? obedient children, and like unto our Saviour?—I would we were! But if we be not, either we do not *yet* rightly apprehend our calling, through some delusion or other; or else, if we be indeed sincere, and *do* know our calling, and desire to abide by it, there is some further allowance, direct or indirect, to be made for our infirmity still. The mystery of reconciliation remains a *mystery*, if henceforward nothing shall be implied or recognized (in the writings of its inspired interpreters) as acceptable obedience, short of that perfect transformation into the likeness of the new Lawgiver, which *ought*, under his revelation, to prevail.

Cf. above,
pp. 158-9.

Of what importance, therefore, it is to feel, that the *successors* of Christ, also, are writing to *our own real selves*, and not to a race of imaginary beings, it becomes a matter of too selfish concern to us, not to perceive. Is, then, the manner of the apostolical epistles that which is adapted to the real state of human nature, under the existing circumstances of revelation?

We have already represented the existing state Lect. ii

of Christian man, with relation to his Maker and Judge, to be a condition (generally) of *spiritual trial*. Those outward signs which bore witness to, and supported, the infant state of Christianity, (nor only this, but connected it, naturally, with a system of visible demonstrations altogether,) have long since ceased.

Consider the Apostles, then, as (what they truly are) final and permanent interpreters of the divine counsel; as the intercommunicators between the incarnate Deity himself, and the successors of themselves in office, who should presently become subjects of the Spirit's ordinary influence only; persons, therefore, who should have (in course of time) to uphold the same great cause of everlasting truth with themselves, not, as *they* upheld it, by signs and demonstration of power, but by merely human and outward means; when they should be left simply *as men among men*; not, indeed, without *the Comforter*, but without his open warrant;

Eph. vi. 17. and with nothing but that *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, and the inward confidence vouchsafed to personal integrity and perseverance, in the midst of gainsaying and disobedience. Consider the Epistles, as written under a foreknowledge, existing *somewhere*, how these things would be, and how will they appear *then*? Is the tenor of their teaching suitable to the existing situation of Christ's Church, as now

Cf. Note a,
in this Lec-
ture.

“militant upon earth?” Is it suitable to the condition in which we ourselves, at this day, stand? Is the physical and moral constitution which we feel ourselves possessed of, and by which we are influenced, that to which the Apostles make appeal?

With regard to *general* manner, then, I think it is impossible not to perceive, throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, (and in those of St. Paul even most particularly,) that they address a race of persons under a silent and spiritual dispensation—persons, to whom a fulness of all necessary knowledge is vouchsafed, and to whom no further sign remains in store to be given. Their authors write as “interpreters,” and not as “legislators.” Wherefore, though from the singularity of the case their interpretations have now the force of law, and are evidently intended to be handed down as such, they add nothing to the original preparation, upon which they proceed, as affecting man’s salvation. Do they not seem to proceed upon the supposition of all essential terms being settled and complete? of a perfect cure provided for the worst extent of man’s misery; but of a perfect liberty, at the same time, in the subjects to whom it should be offered, to avail or not avail themselves of its preserving power? They assume the *fall* and *restoration* of man in the most complete

2 Cor. v. 17. manner. *Old things are passed away, and all things are become new, if any man be in Christ. Nothing is now of consequence but this. And the outward acceptance of that holy name being once rightly and duly completed, the subsequent test of a sincere union is the simplest imaginable: These, and these, are the works of the flesh—and these, the works of the Spirit: and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live, therefore, in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.*

Gal. v. 19,
&c.

Thus, as though they concluded the proportion between obedience asked of the believer, and grace promised to him, to be effectually and intelligibly established, all the practical details of their Epistles, their exhortations, their dissuasions, are the very simplest appeals to common understanding and real life. They do not flatter, but neither do they frighten. They speak the very language of simple honesty and unsuspecting truth. They desire to *lead*, but not to *compel*. While there breathes through these

1 Cor. ix.
22.

sacred compositions a spirit that becomes *all things to all men, that it may by all means save some*, not a vestige is to be traced of that indis-

Matt. xxiii.
15.

criminate and spurious zeal which would *compass sea and land to make one proselyte*. There is no mistake, in them, of vulgarity for humility; but true condescension and true dignity

meet together. Their general manner is, accordingly, that of *persuasive and calm appeal*—the manner (as we think) *proportionate and congenial with the character of the present existing form of the divine dispensation*.

For is not this exactly what our case requires? Suppose we felt ourselves to be addressed *now*, through a voice *minatory and peremptory*; to be threatened with immediate retributions and visible avengings:—should we believe as readily, as now we do? I am persuaded we should be ensnared to demand the signs of corresponding, visible power; and so, by resistance, to abuse that liberty, of which we cannot but be now conscious.

Suppose, again, that the Epistles carried this their mildness beyond a certain point; that they were wavering and indecisive in their tone:—we might suspect the source of their authority.

Suppose that they wandered into flights of mysticism, or were wholly taken up with general and indefinite things¹; we should deny that they described and addressed ourselves.

¹ Cf. Bishop Taylor's Advice to his Clergy, *Rule 42*. "Do
 " not spend your sermons in general and indefinite things;
 " as in exhortations to the people to get Christ, to be united
 " to Christ, and things of the like unlimited signification . . .
 " . . . for generals not explicated do but fill the people's
 " heads with empty notions, and their mouths with perpetual

By tempering (as they do) firmness with candour; faith with reason; modesty with power; justifying and enforcing the peculiar *motives* which are *above* unassisted nature, by strength of the conclusions which lie within it; being indulgent, and yet impartial; not imprudently refraining from *fear*, yet speaking evidently, by general preference, as under a dispensation of *love*; they meet human nature, as now existing in an awakened and enlightened conscience, in every point. Truly they do indeed *know what is in man*; and they treat him accordingly.

Their condescension to every variety of station; their addresses to every age, and relative condition; in short, the infinitely diversified *reality* of their appeals; all are as fresh, as applicable to the exigencies of our own existing nature, as if they were fruits gathered into the storehouse of truth only yesterday. What is Ephesus, or Corinth, now? Where is Philippi, or Colosse? How little does it matter what, or where! Their spiritual possessions all are *here*. The wives and husbands; fathers and children; masters and servants; all the accountable stewards of God's grace to them committed; *these* are with us. The letters, which instructed them,

“unintelligible talk; but their hearts remain empty, and
“themselves are not edified.” *Clergyman's Instructor*, p. 104.
edit. 1807.

are ours; and shall remain for ever the light unto salvation of Christian brethren, *even as* Acts ii. 39. *many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Whereon our *individual* confidence may rest, in writings *thus generally* characterized, will be the next subject of our thoughts.

LECTURE VII.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

WE have arrived at the consideration of Scripture, “as a rule and law of life adequate to the “wishes and the wants of the *individual* believer.”

In taking the words of the text as an introduction to this subject, it is not necessary to perplex the question by entering into any critical niceties. It will be sufficient to repeat what was assumed concerning the two immediately preceding verses in the opening Lecture; namely, Cf. Lect. i. p. 1. that they cannot reasonably be understood otherwise than of the whole volume of canonical Scripture, Cf. Hooker, Eccles. Polity, book i. §. 14. as it is now presented to ourselves; and that, in their most important application, every individual Christian has certainly a share in them. Whatever difference might arise from setting forth their peculiar application to “teachers,” is, comparatively, of little consequence.

One remark may be added, concerning the verses of the text, with reference to the general argument of the foregoing Lectures; viz. that, however understood, they justify the weight therein attached to the Scriptures of the "Old" Testament, as essentially connected with the "New." And this confirmation is most valuable. For though the "New" Testament *without* the "Old" might possess a much more popular attraction, as a *code of morals only*; it would not be (as we contend it is) so profitable for *doctrine*. And thus losing its foundation, where it rests in the very *depth of the individual conscience*, its consequent peculiar power of satisfying to the full the existing necessities of man would decay and fall.

Now, in proceeding to the inquiry before us, there is a preliminary point which I would desire, at all hazards, to state (or recapitulate) distinctly. It relates to the true posture of every question concerning *God's goodness*, in respect of his dispensations to man, among persons living in the light, and called to the obedience of an acknowledged revelation from heaven.

This question is, unhappily, too often mistaken. We are apt to treat it as an *abstract* question; whereas it is, really, a *practical* one. In other words, we are too ready to venture on the more abstract and hypothetical discussion of it, before we have been thoroughly convinced in

our own hearts, by practical experiment, that *God is good*. Hence we are ensnared frequently to travel beyond our record. We *speculate*, as it were, for the “Jews;” we speculate for the “heathen.” And sometimes (it is to be feared) *compassion* betrays us into shades of “infidelity;” and oftener, a needless *exaggeration* of our own blessings excludes the comprehensive yearnings of “charity.” Sometimes we are unjust to God; sometimes to man. I apprehend, that our true business, rather, is (at least in the first instance) to *speculate* neither for the one nor for the other, (as was suggested in the last Lecture;) but to *observe and estimate for ourselves*. He that has given *us* our portion, also gave *them* theirs. If he is good and just to us, he was good and just to them. *We* shall be tried, neither in the balance of the “Jews,” nor in that of the “heathen;” *the word which CHRIST hath spoken, the same shall judge us in the last day*. This view of the “divine goodness” is of primary importance in considering “the fulness of holy Scripture to satisfy the wants and condition of an individual;” because it strikes, in the outset, at the very root of all rebellious, or timorous, or peevish discontent, *grounded on the condition of other people*. He that complains, and refuses to be satisfied, when he *himself* has no wrong to be redressed, may receive his answer from our Saviour’s parable; *I do thee no*

Lect. vi.
II. §. 1.

John xii.
48.

Matt. xx.
13, &c.

wrong—*Take that thine is, and go thy way. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*—and he may trace the features of his own disposition in the likeness of the jealous complainer. He (on the contrary) who, through personal conviction, has learnt to assure himself that he may with safety *trust his Maker*, has passed his main difficulty in the beginning; and instead of keeping “doubt” as a phantom always before him, is enabled honestly to *go on* the rest of *his way rejoicing*. Wherefore, looking to the state of *our own* knowledge, and the tenor of *our own* dispensation, the important question seems to be; “Is the Almighty, as a supreme governor and “lawgiver, good to ourselves?” Does he offer to ourselves *terms*, such as we *can* comply with? Does he vouchsafe unto ourselves *means* and *motives* sufficient to meet the necessities of our condition?

Cf. Acts
viii. 39.

Proceeding, then, upon the same principles
 Cf. Lect. i. with which we started in our commencement, I *assume*, that to *us* are certainly revealed these influential doctrines: “a knowledge of the perfect purity and holiness of God;” of the “original corruption of man;” of “atonement by the blood of JESUS CHRIST;” of the “resurrection to eternal life;” of “sanctification by the HOLY SPIRIT;” of the “necessity of *faith*, as a principle of living;” of the “positive knowledge

“ that this our present state is by design left an
 “ imperfect one, inasmuch as it is a state of
 “ *trial*; but that there is another state to come,
 “ wherein all things will be made straight.”

Other points of belief, not less important to a right and adequate apprehension of the sacred Volume, but of a complexion more specifically “ theological,” I forbear to mention, as not *strictly* falling in with the present purpose. These now enumerated are, as I conceive, the essential and influential forms, in which *all* Christian doctrines come to action; and therefore, those with which we have to do.

For let it be remembered what our object is; viz. not to unfold or vindicate these or any doctrines, either originally, or in detail; but viewing them as *established*, to maintain the “ authority” of that Volume which contains them, as a “ rule and law of life.”

I would, that the natural and lawful subjects of Christian discipline did but consider more simply, and more seriously, *this* great thing; that *to him that knoweth to do good*, in an especial measure, *and doeth it not*, *to him that very* James iv.
17. *knowledge is sin*. We have a rule and law of life prescribed to us in Scripture, which represents *itself* as a *positive talent* given, of which a *specific account* must be returned; it challenges us, on our personal peril, making appeal to a “ life to come.” Nay, (if I have any just appre-

hension of what the spirit and power of the Gospel is,) it challenges an acceptance of itself, not *vague* or *partial*, but *peculiar* and *entire*: neither will it be satisfied with any other; and neglect or refusal of this, *alone*, may prove a fatal error in any steward's declaration at the day of reckoning, even where all else is fair.

This is an awful subject, and demands fuller notice. There is also more of human interpretation mixed with it; therefore let it be weighed with the greater caution. But let us reflect on this that follows.

We Christians live in the concentered light of *all* "knowledge," human and divine. Unto us are gathered all ages, and people, and nations, and languages. The heathen have ministered to us: the Jews have ministered to us: GOD himself has made us the depositaries of his own word and will. Again: we ourselves are ever running, and have run, unto all the uttermost parts of the earth, seeking more "knowledge," and finding it.

On the natural face of such a situation, it is no wonder that we are inclined to be *proud* of our possessions; or that we are unwilling to prune down our flourishing tree of universal wisdom—into the branches whereof come and lodge all the "winged utterances" of all people—to the simple stock of one small volume, such as we have described Scripture to be. It is quite

impossible not to have delight in the richness of many of our *other* treasures. We cannot deny the excellence of very much of heathen, or mere moral wisdom.

It is maintained, that neither need we do so. It has been argued, that the fulness of the Gospel is more equitably and more truly glorified by the *proper* exaltation of uninspired knowledge, than by its depression. We think that Scripture by no means wishes to disclaim all fellowship with "Philosophy;" but, on the contrary, under proper limitation, to establish an union with it. Scripture receives from human wisdom gladly the ministry of *illustration*; it accepts from the same source, in a great measure, more detailed analyses of *duty*. Reserving to itself the sole dispensing of *principles*, and distribution of *motives*, (as well it may, seeing it is the very *mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations*; and that *such* gifts, by their nature, appertain to the jurisdiction of a revealed authoritative will alone,) it seems to proceed upon an implied calculation, that its own sufficiency of practical detail will be acknowledged, because capable of being shown, from truths known before.

But, as it was said in a former Lecture, in contemplating the volume of Scripture as a revelation, that there is *one* great spiritual temptation to be withstood, in respect of *infidelity*, as

Lect. v. pp.
136—9.

Coloss. i.
26.

Lect. iv.
p. 88.

to the *whole* ; so is it to be said here, that there seems a like trial to be undergone, in respect of its acceptance as the “rule of faith” and “law of individual life.”

For it is an obvious snare, that many, out of such abundance of knowledge, should be tempted to forget, at times, this grand and simple point ; that “all *vital* truth is to be sought from Scripture “alone.” Hence, that they should be tempted rather to *combine* systems for themselves, according to a proportion and fancy of their own, than neither to add nor to diminish any thing from that which Christ and his Apostles have enjoined ; to make up, as it were, a *cento* of doctrines and of precepts ; to take from Christ what *pleases* them, and from other stores what *pleases* them ; (the *best*, of course, as appears to *their* judgment, from each, so as to exhibit the most perfect whole ;) taking (for example) the “blessed hope “of everlasting life” from Jesus of Nazareth, but rejecting his “atonement ;” or honouring highly his example of “humanity,” but disrobing him of his “divinity ;” or, “accepting all the comfortable things” of the dispensation of the SPIRIT, but “refusing its strictnesses and self-denials ;” or, forming any other combination whatsoever, to the exclusion of the *entire* GOSPEL : thus inviting Christian hearers, not to the “supper” of the king’s son, but to a sort of miscellaneous banquet, a *cæna collatitia* of their own :

using their liberty, in short, (we fear,) *as an occasion* to that “natural” disposition, which Christ came to correct and to restore. Galat. v. 13.

Now, that by such methods, enforced by education, and strengthened by the best of secondary motives, men may attain to an excellent proficiency in “morals,” I am neither prepared nor disposed to dispute. I am not desirous of disputing, that they may possess therein an excellent “religion,” as opposed to Mahometanism or Paganism. But, that they possess the *true* account to be given of their stewardship of that one talent, the GOSPEL *itself*, I *do* doubt, in sorrow and in fear. I *do* doubt, whether they *live the life that now is*, as St. Paul lived it, *by the faith of the Son of God*; by true apprehension of the things that *He* suffered for us, and the right which he has purchased in us, to command in us all excellent qualities and actions: Galat. ii. 20. and (further) of the invisible, but real, assistance which he gives us, towards the performance of them. Cf. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

Of all such persons—of all Christian persons wherever found, living good moral lives with an imperfect creed, we cannot but think and speak with tenderness; perhaps, not without some conscious shame. It is impossible not to love *good conduct*, every where. It is *natural* to love it, in the first place, because it always helps ourselves; it strengthens the hands of good

against evil ; it lightens our own labour : and it is *right* to love it, in the second place, for *his* sake, unto whom it truly belongs, although the doers often be not sensible of this proprietorship. It is, however, equally impossible to say of such persons as we are now describing, when they are born and live under an approved religious establishment, and have means and understanding to interpret rightly the *revealed word of God*, that we think them in a *safe* way, for the reason just now given ; because it is impossible for us to think (without confessing ourselves to be either *mised*, or else *indifferent* to all distinctions of faith) that they *live the life which they now live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God*. And if, when they come to the door that openeth into glory hereafter, and knock, and ask for admittance, it be indeed found, (as we believe, and are persuaded,) that none but CHRIST the MEDIATOR openeth the door ; how shall they murmur, if it be not opened unto persons who have persisted, all their lives, in not *truly* receiving him ?

Cf. John x.
9.
Luke xiii.
23—27.

There are many such cases in the world ; but we leave them all to the wise justice whereunto they belong : not presuming to *judge* them, from our own imperfect knowledge ; yet earnestly *warning* them of their great, and we think reasonable, *danger*.

Cf. Lect.
iii. §. 2.
§. 4.

For, the “ rule and law of life,” which we have

in the Gospel prescribed to us, becomes *imperative* only through connection with its *peculiar doctrines*. If it be not true, that Christ our Saviour has *redeemed* and purchased us with his most precious blood; I do not see how it is true, that we are bound to *live* in particular, as the New Testament commands us. The Gospel stands, in such case, only on the quicksands of “expediency” and “decency.” It must be received *all together*, to become *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*. I admit, that we may not *like* it all. This has been acknowledged before. I do not think the whole is of a *quality* to be *relished*, until we have accepted and *digested* all together.

Cf. 1 Pet.
i, 19.

Rom. i. 16.

Lect. iv.
p. 93, &c.

We may not, therefore, like it all; or we may wish that we did not know *so much*; we may even complain of our *excess* of *light*. The Spirit who dictated the Book of Life foreknew this; was well aware that many *prefer darkness*. But these are considerations past. The Gospel is *here*. It is among us: and we have no power to get rid of our knowledge of it. The secret it unfolds may be painful to *know*; but it is *ours*, and we can no longer fly from its accompanying responsibility. We cannot, at any rate, *disprove* the truth of Christianity: the very utmost that unbelief and wickedness together can do, is to make it *doubtful*^a. But, if we be faithful to

Cf. John
iii. 18—21.

^a If this be considered too sharply or uncandidly stated, let the train of thought be put to the test of a comparison

ourselves, we shall perceive, that the rejection of it *now*, because it is “doubtful,” is altogether inadmissible: it amounts to an entire rejection of “faith,” as a practical principle in religious matters. The question to be considered rather is, “Can we live by the motives and the rule of “holy Scripture, as revealed and commanded to “us?” Nothing but a positive demonstration of its doctrines being either “mischievous,” or else “superfluous and unsuitable to their design,” (and so, of course, in either case inapplicable to our individual wants, according to its own terms;) nothing but a demonstration of one or other of *these* conclusions, will excuse the rejection or slighting of “revelation.”

I. Let it be asked first, then, according to this order, “Are these great and influential doctrines, as before stated, and which are at least “*proposed* as the solace of our wretchedness, “and the warrant of our hope, justly to be accounted *mischievous* ^{b?}”

No doubt it will be by some asserted that they *are*. But where shall we be referred for

with some of the concluding chapters of “Butler’s Analogy,” (part ii. chap. 6. &c. and conclusion,) and let it only be so far received as it may be consistent with that.

^b I do not mean to advance this as the *proper* ground upon which to uphold the dispensations of the Deity, or as the *foundation* of our obedience. God be praised! *the earnest expectation* of his creatures looks forth from a *surer* hold than this! But it is still an *outwork* between our cause and the objector. For the point of the case now before us (we

proof of this assertion? Not to the *use* of these high doctrines, but to the *abuse* of them; not to the practice, but to the neglect of them. We shall be referred to the excesses of "Fanaticism," or to the torpor of "Formality." And the inference from the one will be, that they lead to "madness;" from the other, to "hypocrisy." But what does this prove, except the truth of what the pious and humble Christian himself is, of all persons, the foremost to understand and to deplore; that as well "Fanaticism," as "Formality," stands condemned by the spirit of true religion?

The only fair appeal (if we are to look, in such a case, to *examples* at all) would lie, not to the *abuse*, nor even to the *average* aspect, but to the *most perfect* embodying of Christian belief in practice, which can any where be found. It is, however, better not to look to *any* extraneous instances, in a question of this nature. It is the *individual's self* in which its power is to be proved. It is he, who is the aspirant to happiness. It is he, whose everlasting salvation is at stake. Let "examples" therefore be deferred, till they are wanted. We are contemplating

contend) is one that does not admit of *indifference*. We cannot, therefore, listen any longer to objections, that may arise on the score of "hardship" only, or "unpleasantness." It rests with him who would condemn our faith to prove, that its doctrines are "positively mischievous."

a *solitary* case now ; that of a man's own personal entrance into holiness. It is only in its *operation* that religion becomes *social* ; its *root* and principle is *single* and separate. The reason why so many fall away is, that they *have not root in themselves*. They build upon "fashion;" upon "custom;" upon "precedent;" upon "abuse;" upon "corruption;" and by necessary consequence, they fall ; for their only root has been—in others. He that would at once *endure unto the end*, and have peace with others also, *must have salt within himself*.

Cf. Matth.
xiii. 5. 20,
21.

Cf. Mark
ix. 50.

Referring, then, to the satisfaction of an individual conscience, look what is the genuine and innate tendency of any of the great Christian doctrines.

Look (for example) at the sense of *natural corruption* ; of "original guiltiness" in the sight of a perfect and a holy Being, in whose sight the very *stars are not pure*. What objection shall be made to *this*, as being of a "mischievous" tendency ? That it destroys man's happiness ? his inward comfort ? degrades him in his own eyes, and paralyzes his efforts to attain excellence ?

Job xxv. 5.

If such were either its intention or necessary result, the objection might be urged justly. But the very *reverse* of such effect is its *proper* influence. It does degrade man (we admit) from the perilous height of an intemperate pride,

Lect. iv.
p. 97.

down to a true consciousness of his original; but why? to put him on his guard; to make him watchful and careful; *lest being lifted up* ^{1 Tim. iii. 6.} *with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

Grant, however, that such knowledge *is*, by itself, ever so dangerous: it comes not, it does not stand alone. Its illustration and corrective comes *with* it. The same record that unfolds to us “corruption,” awakens us to “renovation” also. Look at man *now*, either in his “soul” or in his “body;” the prospect is the same. The cure is at least co-extensive with the wound and sickness of either. Whether we look to “death and resurrection,” or to “sin and grace,” there is *one* interpretation; *As in Adam all die, even* ^{1 Cor. xv. 22.} *so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Let any other of the doctrines of the Gospel be examined in the same way. If there be found one, without that corresponding encouragement which tends to inlist *all* on the side and in the service of the purest virtue, let it be rejected! If not, alas! for him, who (under other evidences so richly supplied to him) shall run the hazard of *treading under foot the Son of* ^{Heb. x. 29.} *God; of counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing; and of doing despite unto the Spirit of grace^c!*

^c I am well aware, how much may here appear to be wanting to the argument, as well in respect of a more full

2 Cor. xi.
21.

II. But we speak thus far, *as concerning reproach only, as though we had been weak*. Another tone more befits the persuasion—that we have the REVELATION and the WILL of GOD. It is to be contended, therefore, secondly, that “not only are the great Christian doctrines *not hurtful* in their tendency;” not only *not superfluous or unsuitable* to their proposed object; but they are *indispensable*. They fill up the very chasm that was void in the history and philosophy of man. They are themselves the pregnant evidences of their own truth. They demand admission into our *hearts*, and find it there, as in a proper home. There is nothing *but* these that can *satisfy* the soul, to its conviction and comfort. Deprive Christianity of the “atonement,” and *the salt has lost its savour*. Deprive the atonement of its explanatory cause and antecedent necessity, and not only is holy Scripture no longer honestly comprehensible, but we are no longer comprehensible to our own

Cf. Lect. iv.
pp. 107—8.

vindication of the doctrine of “original corruption,” as of a detailed examination of other doctrines. But it will be obvious, that the compass of the present work does not admit of either extension. I have instanced the doctrine likely to be *most* offensive to an objector: to estimate the *proper* consequences of those of the “atonement” and of “spiritual influence” respectively, let reference be made to Paley’s Sermons. (Serm. xx. and xxv.) I can hardly conceive any other of the doctrines here mentioned (or implied) to be made chargeable with hurtful effect.

selves. The wants and consciousness of man are still unprovided for.

For, no longer resting any thing on *suppositions*, but on (what we conceive to be) *facts* ; I presume, that the veriest enemy of Christianity will not maintain, that man has *retrograded* in morals since the introduction of the Gospel. If, then, there be found among mankind that now are, a leaning of the thoughts of the heart to evil ; a general disposition to unrighteousness ; a natural distaste for spiritual things, without discipline and cultivation ; how are such phenomena to be *accounted for*, and how *judged of*?

And here, let it not be idly taken for granted, that “ the world is wicked,” and “ man corrupt,” merely because we have often heard it said so ; and without any *thought* or sincere persuasion in ourselves, that the real truth is thereby spoken. We know better than to expect a man in full health to believe us, if we tell him that he is desperately sick. Let it be ascertained clearly, whether such a disposition does exist or not.

Now, in collecting such estimate, our first thoughts will naturally tend towards *atrocious crimes*, and the more shocking cases of human depravity, which have either fallen within our own experience and recollection, or of which we have heard from others. And truly, these its practical and palpable forms, in which the operation of “ sin” meets us, are its worst influences,

and those most obviously dangerous in the eyes of society. Yet let us understand, that it is not, cannot be, for any sum, or number of atrocious crimes actually committed, that the world *in mass* is called “wicked” (as it is) either in Scripture, or by the good and wise. It would be treating the virtuous and the vicious just alike, to pronounce judgment so !

The “wickedness” for which the world stands condemned has a much earlier and deeper root. We shall discover it in that *want of principle*, by which the rebellious will of *the natural man* rejects *the things of the Spirit of God* ; by which it passes over the thought of “heaven,” and of an “incorruptible treasure” only, as vanity and “foolishness :” by which (again) persons that are long come to ripeness of understanding, know not whose they are, nor whom they serve ; and (of course) know not how they should think of their fellow-servants, and behave to *them*, during their passage and time of trust. What wonder, therefore, is it, if they begin to smite these, and evil entreat them ; and *to eat and drink, and to be drunken* ?

Luke xii.
45.

Let the charge be denied, if it be not *strictly true* : but is it not thus—that men, even Christian men, take up the world in a spirit of contention, as if *all* lay there ? as if it were a man’s sole business to serve and provide for his own interest ; and (for this end) to overtake, or outstrip

his neighbours ; and as if *he* only were the person to be pitied or despised, who is quietest, or poorest, or (in whatever manner it may so happen) *hindmost in the race* ? If it *be* thus, I think it is quite clear, that all such persons will serve “ the world ” *first*, at any rate. Whether they will serve GOD *afterwards*, or in what measure they will serve him, will depend much upon circumstances ; as, “ whether they can ; ” or, “ it “ be quite convenient ; ” or considered “ respect- “ able ” so to do.

And all these things they will do—wherefore ? Because they do not think of GOD, nor of *Him*, *whom God hath sent* to reclaim and to deliver them ! As was said before, they know not whose they are, nor whom they serve. Men bear the image and superscription of the KING OF KINGS written in broad and legible characters upon all the powers of their body and mind, and yet will not acknowledge him. They show it, in the cleverness of their heads, and in the skill of their hands ; in the dignity of their upright attitude ; in the strength of their manhood ; in the beauty of their understanding ; in the music of their tongue ; in the thousand gifts and graces, that carry honour in the sight of their fellows ; and yet they will not *glorify* GOD, the Giver of all, either in their body or in their spirit ; *they will not accept CHRIST, as a King, to reign over them !*

Cf. 1 Cor.
vi. 20. and
Luke xix.
14.

See Lect.
viii. 1. §. 1.
§. 2.

Now, even to omit mention, for a moment, of the *greatest* and *worst* offence that is in this disposition; (I mean its entire wrongness towards the *Almighty* himself;) let it be considered, (under the subordinate case only,) how absolutely impossible it is with such a disposition to behave in any thing like a right manner towards our *fellow-creatures*; how certain it is, that all the pious and tender hearted must condemn it! And indeed, if such temper were allowable; if the want of charity, of justice, and of mercy towards those around us, or beneath us, could be thought even *excusable*; what comfort and satisfaction could such a state of things as this world offers afford to the “poor and simple?” or how could *they*, thinking for themselves, or how could others, thinking for them, ever heartily agree to God’s “justice?”

1 John iv.
20.

Yet such (we think) as has been described, the world is, without Christian love! not destitute of a certain face of wisdom and of virtue; (nay, and that a very comely face, if it be but seen from a favourable point;) but far removed from the clear sight of *enduring* truth and goodness; not rightly knowing even its own brethren, whom it hath seen; much less God, whom it hath not seen.

We have to judge, every man for himself, whether this sort of disposition is to be found in the world, or not. Only let it be remembered,

that in whatever proportion it *is* found, in the same does it show forth its own condemnation, and the want of something further. If this be *bad*, therefore, as a state of things, must we not desire and seek a *better*? Can *this* satisfy the *spirit* of a man, even when he thinks of *men* alone? How much less, when he comes to consider “sin,” with reference, not to *man*, as he is *injured*, but to *GOD*, as he is *offended* by it?

We must, then, seek a better “rule and law of life” than any that is to be found *without* the Gospel: not from any conceit of over-much righteousness, or any wish to be thought holier than others; but from an honest and simple discerning between “right” and “wrong,” between “good” and “evil.” I say, not in overstrained conceit, or in any want of charity; because the world, which stands condemned in Scripture as *lying in wickedness*, is elsewhere in the same Scripture spoken of with the tenderest regard: as when our Saviour said, *I came not to judge the world, but to save the world*. He that saves, loves. And again; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. What, therefore, is God’s work, and the object of *his* regard, it is not for us to presume to set at nought rashly, or lightly to condemn. But if there be *one* rule and way of living, *one* aim and understanding, to be noted, for the

1 John v.
19.

John xii.
47.

John iii.
16.

1 Cor. vii.
31.

condemnation of which there is both plain authority and reason; and (at the same time) there be found *another*, by which an easy door is opened into the way of *using this same world as not abusing it*; will not they, who understand their calling and condition here most effectually, do well, to cast away the wrong rule, and cleave to the right one?

Ef. 1 Cor.
iv. 7.

Which rule (I demand that it be fairly considered) must really meet, *most* fully and consistently, the necessities and aspirations of reflecting man? Suppose him to follow up his estimate, as just represented, with the question; “Then, if “these things be so, as I perceive they are, with “so many of my fellow-creatures, who made *me* “to differ from another? or what have I that “I did not receive?” Aye, who indeed! Time was, when not only such worldly spirits as those of which we have been speaking, but the very worst offenders that have ever stood condemned by human justice, were no worse than ourselves^d! when they came naked from their

^d “It was not an extravagance of humility, therefore, I “should think, but a sound calculation, or a natural feeling, “which once made a distinguished moralist, when he saw one “of his fellow-creatures under the extreme sentence of law, “express his thankfulness, that he had escaped the fall and “fate to which he was perhaps in himself as liable as the “guilty sufferer.” p. 13. *Assize Sermon, preached before the University of Oxford, March 6, 1817. by John Davison, M. A. Fellow of Oriel College.*

I take

mothers' womb, with only the furniture of natural hearts and human passions! The *root* of all their guilt was in them then: there *must* have been a root: crime could not have flourished to its height, without a stock whereon temptation might fasten: and was not the same root in *us* also? was it not as much obnoxious to divine displeasure; as much a barrier from HIS presence, who is *of purer eyes than to behold evil*, in our own case, as in theirs? Habak. i.
13.

Let the sufficiency, the *indispensable necessity* of holy Scripture, "as a store of means adapted to the wants of an *individual* human being," be brought in sobriety to the test of thoughts like these. *Various* restraints may have, instrumentally, preserved the Christian, who (at any given moment) stands upright in his calling, from the *overt act* of transgression among men. But, to say nothing of all sins of "infirmity;" all intermediate deviations from holiness, which must in the very best man's case have intervened between the season of his birth and that of his matured reflection; we must account, somehow or other, for the removal (if it be removed) of this original uncleanness in the sight of God.

It is *here*, that Christianity so *fully*, so *espe-*

I take this opportunity of acknowledging with humble delight, several approximations of thought between this Sermon and the present Lecture.

cially meets, to restore and comfort us. It is *here*, when we have sought in vain amongst all human systems with the inquiry, *Who will show us any good*, in this respect? that *the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance upon us*, and gives us peace. *Here it is*, when (as it were) our nursing fathers and mothers—the schools of the philosophy of this world—have forsaken us, that *the Lord taketh us up*.

Psal. iv. 6.

Cf. Psalm xxvii. 10.

Cf. Lect. v. II. §. 2.

2 Cor. v. 19.

Cf. Lect. ii.

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Man did not want, before the Gospel, ingenious and plausible theories of virtue, nor subtle analyses of the powers of the mind, as far as the investigations of mere *science* can extend: but he failed in *application* of the knowledge which he *possessed*, from want of a thorough discerning measure of *his own true natural spirit*. He needed a clew to unravel this; a standard to settle and enforce moral obedience; he needed to know *himself*, in relation to his *Maker*. These master-lights the Gospel effectually supplies. Man is revealed, “alienated from God, by the “waywardness of a corrupt and rebellious *spirit*.” GOD is revealed, in *Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, through the ordeal of a moral and *spiritual* probation. The “standard” of conduct, which was needed, is supplied also; the standard of “individual responsibility at the “bar of a future and unerring judgment.” And a *just* view of man, in relation to his fellow-creatures, follows together; *because we thus judge*,

that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

To me it seems, that, to a thoughtful person, born, by God's blessing, in a country where the light of the Gospel is not hid ; day unto day should utter speech, and night unto night show the *certainty* of the word which Christ hath spoken, and which hath been spoken concerning Christ. Such a one *communeth with his own* Ps. iv. 4. heart what all that mystery of wickedness may be, of which he both feels the *elements* existing within himself, inwardly ; and the *effect* prevailing all around him, outwardly. And no answer can satisfy his questionings ; no answer speaks in a voice or manner worthy of reasonable acceptance, except the saying ; that *by one man* Rom. v. 12. *sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* He accepts *this* answer, because it is, at least, no matter of doubt or disputation, that *sin* and *death* are in the world ; and it is a truth, to be declared again and again, as of the very utmost importance to man's welfare, that the heart which does not acknowledge, in humility, its own natural propensity to wrong, can have no true knowledge of itself, nor (as yet) any just perception of the most ordinary workings of experience.

With this *conviction*, then, of *sin*, in the first instance, testifying of the *need* of one that might restore all things, let the *awakened* spirit come and stand before the CROSS OF CHRIST. May not *two* voices, as it were, be heard from thence speaking continually? on the side of *suffering*, a mournful challenge; *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger*: on the side of *victory*, a triumphant strain; *It is finished*;—the work, which manifold offences had made it need-
 ful to do: but *be of good cheer* now; *thy sins are forgiven thee!* And the *refreshed* spirit then departs, accordingly; no longer believing *only upon trust*, because of any man's saying; but because it has *itself heard*, and knows, that it has *indeed found the Christ, the Saviour of the world*.

Lament. i.
12.

John xix.
30.

Cf. xvii. 4.

Matt. ix. 2.

Cf. John iv.
42.

Observe, as we proceed, how the *love of God*—that first, and best, and universal, and enduring principle of action, thus arises *naturally*, and *with understanding*; not from the pert appetency of a disproportionate and unholy familiarity; but from a sincere sense of *conscious obligation*, springing out of the fountain of deep humility.

Take another step, and contemplate the Redeemer rising from the grave, in victory. Is

not this, and the conclusion it involves, congenial to the wants and wishes of man? I forbear to dwell upon a point so clear. But let it not be overlooked, that a higher calling, thus laid open and made sure before him, brings to the believer, with it, higher views and stricter obligations. The Almighty has neither depressed *the work of* Job x. 3. *his own hands* in capriciousness; nor exalted him again to any just pretence for pride. No: the Christian, with the hope of glory thus surely made his own, will now set about his *proper work*, as a thing in natural order; even the work of following the steps of his blessed Master, in a life of personal holiness, and of active good-will (in his degree) towards his Christian brethren.

Observe, again, how thus the *second great* Cf. Lect. iii. pp. 75—6. *commandment* hangs itself inseparably upon the *first*; what is the harmony, order, and proportion between the *love of God* and the *love of our neighbour*.

Observe another thing; how clearly, *now*, the exhortation given at “baptism” to *his sureties* comes round upon the *believer himself*, with a full and perfect understanding; viz. “that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness.” O beautiful and most

Office for
Baptism.
Exhortation.

Cf. Rom. vi. 4, &c.

affecting watchfulness of our parent Church; by which (as *now* we come to perceive) she piously took care to place us in the arms of God's mercy and of Christ's atonement, even long before we ourselves could have the knowledge *who* was *accepting*, or *who restoring* us! And shall we now say coldly, that she frustrated or made of none effect the grace of God, because we see that so many have *refused* the health whereunto they were reclaimed? Forbid it faith, and hope, and charity!

But to proceed. Suppose a case to have advanced thus far: is this all that is wanting unto man? and does Christian doctrine leave us here?—God forbid! for who should *then* walk stedfast unto the end, through all the weaknesses of his own purpose, or through the unkindness and resistance of the world!—No: we have not been thus far tempted by promises, only to find ourselves flattered and betrayed, as difficulties might increase around us. We serve one who knew us better; who, as he *loved his own* in the beginning, so *loveth them unto the end*; and has not left us *comfortless*. *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities*; and we *know*, that *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*; even that purpose, I believe, by which a merciful Creator *desireth not the death of any of his creatures, but that all should come to everlasting life*. Add to

Cf. John
xiii. 1.

Id. xiv. 18.

Rom. viii.
26, 28.

this, the doctrine (with its inferences) of Christ's *intercession*; and the necessities and aspirations of man *are* satisfied. It is no just objection, to affirm, that "there is much *more* which we *might* have, and have *not*:" the question is, "What do we *want* more?"

Let it be noticed, again, how every thing thus advances in perfect "order." Let it be observed, how we are thus able to perceive ourselves commanded to *watch and pray*; to *seek out of the book of the Lord, and read*; to *take the whole armour of the Spirit*; not *arbitrarily*, and as by a *task-master*; but as by a *friend*, whom we now distinctly feel to *be* a friend; whose counsels we can now ourselves discover to be justified.

Matth. xxv.
13. xxvi.
41.
Is. xxxiv.
16.
Eph. vi. 11,
13.

Cf. Ps. l. 4.
and cxxxix.
throughout.

And, if we be *grateful*, I think we shall not fail to notice, and to reverence with a corresponding and proportionate affection, that *consistency* of love and tenderness, with which our Church

^c I have assumed, as a point not to be disputed, that the individual wants of man, proper to be considered in a question of the present nature, are those of the *spirit* only, and not the necessities of the *body*. It must be admitted, further, that the foregoing estimate has been made only from contemplation of the *remedies provided* for such. But surely, the Creator knows best the complete frame of his own creature, and has provided for him accordingly! And it has been the whole purpose of these Lectures to exemplify this; to show, how he has condescended, in the volume of holy Writ, to reveal to man what his wants *are*; to discover him, *as he is*, unto himself, in order to bring him to happiness.

(still following, in desire, the model of His *progressive* care, under whose name she claims authority) invites us to come for rest and refreshment of our souls to the Lord's holy table, as to a *special means of grace*. I will not here speak of the holy Sacrament, as that most necessary means, which it surely is, of mere *outward unity*; but looking to our express object, to the "wants" and the desires only of an individual heart," I say, Let us value the Eucharist, honestly, by *that* test. Does it suit our necessity and our desire, or does it not; that, as pilgrims through a world like this, we may find such access to a living well, from whence our spirits may be filled with consolation? What a bond, then, of something more than *outward unity*;—of *real and essential* fellowship; where *many* pilgrims meet together; and all, to *eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink*; even of the same *spiritual Rock*, that still *follows* us, and *which Rock is Christ*! What if there be *intruders here*, again, as there were *sensualists and sluggards* before? I cannot trace from that the insufficiency of the ordinance, as a channel of personal blessing unto sanctification!

A question remains; "Is all this *reasonable*?" To which the fair answer turns upon a single and very simple point; viz. whether the condition thus described, and the positive application to it of the remedies thus maintained to be

See the manner in which this subject is treated by Hooker, Eccles. Polity, book v. §. 67.

Cf. John iv. 14.
Ps. lxxxiv. 6.

1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

at once suitable and adequate, is *conformable*, or contradictory, to *rational experience*.

Now, I admit that the solution of *this* problem must, in some degree, be *partial*: for it must come, in the first instance, from a *believer*; and next, from the believer of a *particular creed*. But such a one (as we have seen, and know) is no less a subject of "experience," than his sceptical or dissentient fellow-creature. If, therefore, it but agree with *his* sense of man, and man's condition; if it but speak knowledge, and hope, and consolation to *him*; if *he* be sure, that *God is good*, and that they who wilfully reject the Gospel will out of their own mouths be condemned; (since they refuse an interpretation of things, and a provision, which *might* satisfy *any* man;) if, moreover, he himself be evidently no madman, no enthusiast, no hypocrite; if, by virtue of this hope within him, he be found discreet and humble, prudent and temperate, chaste and pious, patient and charitable; if he be one, who understands all *other* knowledge as well as they do, who believe not; if he be an upright ruler or a tender father, a dutiful son or an affectionate husband, a faithful servant or an equitable master;—then I contend that all these things, of which we have been speaking, are "reasonable;" for they are found accepted by the experience of a person—of whom who will deny that he *must* be a *reasonable man*?

Lect. iv. p.
105.

Contrary to man's unassisted apprehension such estimate of things undoubtedly is ; "peculiar" it undoubtedly is. We would not deny or conceal that. Nay, it is the very security of the whole case. If it were not *so*, the Gospel would neither materially differ from, nor be superior to, other systems. "Holy Scripture" would not meet human exigencies better than they do. It would not satisfy all the thoughts and wants of an "individual," as now we think it does. We that are called to the faith and rule of it should not deserve to be entitled *a peculiar people*. It is the "peculiarity" joined to the "reality;" the adaptation of "mysteries" to our familiar "senses;" the union of "faith" with "reason;" which make up, together, (under the view that has been now taken,) the proof of its

1 Pet. ii. 9. DIVINE AUTHORITY.

In challenging attention, however, to the "rule and law of life" proposed to us in holy Scripture, as a law "sufficient for the wants and wishes of every individual person called unto obedience to it;" I am aware, that this *continuous view of personal religion*, by itself, does not fulfil the variety of such a challenge, in all its practical forms. There are other views of this great subject, which must be included, of a more *detached* and partial character. It must present itself to our conviction, as the true channel of security—not *only* when we thus trace it from

its fountain through its whole course; but also, in whatever *point* of its continuous progress the uneasy spirit, weary of inferior hopes, may approach to the current of the *river of life*, and demand its passage over. We must be prepared to give an answer to *others*, as well as to *ourselves*; for *their* reproof and correction; for the *strengthening of them that stand*, and the *raising up of them that fall*; for the *instruction in righteousness of all*. If the Gospel be the great asylum open to all, it must be found open to all conditions, and at all seasons.

And so we think it is. It might be difficult to point out a diversity; whether of moral habit, or natural disposition; whether of accidental state, or artificial station; whether of advancement, or default in holiness; for which a provision may not be discovered (by a serious and sincere inquirer) in holy Writ. But I forbear all special examinations of this sort; all reference, likewise, to the *comprehensive* nature of the Gospel *morality*; because the great *personal doctrines* of that revelation added and applied to the *facts*, which the whole volume of the Bible displays of human nature, seem to involve a *general understanding*, which may best solve all particulars for itself.

I forbear also to dwell upon another very striking feature, which might be depicted as of very considerable force; the *freedom* of the Gos-

Cf. John
xvi. 8.

Cf. Lect. vi.
p. 173.

pel. That "law of liberty," which it leaves to its disciples, in all lesser particulars, after it has once established its dominion in the heart, by convincing believers of *sin, and righteousness, and judgment*, is something, which the condition of the world obviously requires, yet which no *human* authority would dare to give.

Lect. vi. 11.
§. 1.

Before, however, we close the consideration of those features whereby the Gospel is commended to our consciences, as a sufficient provision for the individual; there is one, which perhaps ought not to be passed over in silence: namely, that *indulgence* which it certainly shows (consistently with all that has been heretofore affirmed concerning its sense of "justice") to *sincere* "*repentance*," whenever offered.

It cannot but be felt, that the enunciations of Scripture are so conveyed, with regard to this point, as in none, not even the extremest case of a "death-bed" repentance, positively to exclude all hope to the awakened sinner. Bold, at least, should we pronounce that human hand to be, which would dare to close the gates of mercy, even at the very last! At the same time, so manifest is it, how painful, how severe a trial of disinterested hope and universal charity, this *extremity* of mercy must bring with it, (I mean, to children that have feared their Maker, and endeavoured, through their whole probation, to love and serve him with all diligence and dutiful

desire,) that there seems especial care taken to forewarn us of the error of an envious temper on such ground, by representing it in several of the most *unamiable* portraits which the Gospel exhibits. Let it be enough to advert to the behaviour of the elder brother, in the parable of the “Prodigal Son.” And, in truth, when any Christian may presume to hope, that he himself is surely moving in the way to glory, is it *not* an envious and an offensive thing, to grudge an entrance, even to the guiltiest *penitent*, into a happiness that is more than plentiful for all? Luke xv.
28—30.

Now, it is easy to see the force, the fitness, the necessity, of giving room in *our Lord’s own records*, to such representations, as may provide even for the very last emergency. But, when we acknowledge *this*, let it be borne in mind what is the *lawful* “use” of such intrusted treasure. It is not, that all and every one of the *examples* of Scripture are to be applied *in every case*, wherever they may be forced or fancied to apply. If (for instance) by God’s mercy there be found recorded, in a book intended to be *profitable for instruction in all righteousness*, a case like that of the “penitent thief;”—still, to *apply* this generally, or rashly, is most unscriptural, and most dangerous. Most unbecoming and unreasonable the want of a due discrimination is, where such *rare* picture is *only loosely* quoted and referred to as a pattern of *mercy*; but still more extrava- Luke xxiii.
39—42.

gant, when it is advanced to support a preconceived opinion, of the *inefficiency of good works*, in contributing towards the end of “salvation!”

To reason *thus* is not our *wisdom*; nor is this the “fulness” of Scripture. In rushing upon our *very last* resources to meet what is no more than a *common* demand, we expend, ruinously, upon ordinary cases, what the Spirit of truth has providentially supplied only for otherwise hopeless emergencies. Hence, we naturally bring our materials into discredit, in several ways. The best *general* way of teaching and interpreting is still the *natural* one. Let *extreme cases* be reserved in store for *extreme demands*. It is only *so* that Scripture *does* meet the predicament of *every* individual. It is *so*, that we shall best demonstrate this; best satisfy our own hearts; least offend, and most silence, gainsayers; and most *effectually* restore the *penitent*. I am persuaded the inference is *true*, that with such discretion the APOSTLES taught. I would that indeed we aimed at neither less nor more, than to shape the workings of our zeal by the model of holy Writ itself!

Lect. vi. II.
§. 3.

Another Lecture will maintain the excellence of Scripture, as a guide “amidst the world’s intercourse;” and the design of the whole will be completed.

LECTURE VIII.

ROMANS xii. 5.

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

THE object pursued through the preceding course of Lectures has been, “to assert the divine authority of holy Scripture from its adaptation to the real state of human nature.”

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written, in its behalf, with such various excellence and power, and all that is professed and confidently maintained by champions of every denomination; it is nevertheless most certain, that many appearances are exhibited, among the subjects of the Christian covenant, concerning which it were mere deceiving of ourselves not to acknowledge, that they show most unfavourably for its cause. There are many aspects of life around us, from which it must in fairness be allowed to be no unnatural first impression;—either, that holy Scripture is not that word of *power*, which we proclaim it to be; or else, that man, as he now lives in the world, can never be the person meant to be influenced by it. Whence

it would seem, as though, after all, "truth" and the real "rule of life" were things *yet to be settled*: the acceptance, meanwhile, *as such*, of "holy Scripture" *in particular*, being a matter of mere habit or courtesy; and the curtailment or rejection of it one of indifference and free choice. Practical disobedience, partial contentions, presumptuous questionings, have so staggered the belief, perplexed the reason, or seduced the hearts of many; that to acquiesce unequivocally and unreservedly in the faith, *as we have learned and been assured of it*, is to run great hazard of encountering the reproach of "pre-judice" or "weakness."

Lect. i. p.
19, 20.

Ibid. p. 11,
12, 13.

Nevertheless, it is a *weakness* wherein lies our *strength*. And accordingly, it was taken as a foundation, and enforced by some familiar appeals to plain reason,—that a simple and *implicit faith* in the divine word is not only permissible, but necessary; the judgment, moreover, of a true *wisdom*—since in the volume proposed to our acceptance may be found such consolatory evidence of its own exceeding truth, in the respect of its adaptation to our necessities, as, *once perceived*, will afterwards almost *constrain* the obedient spirit to *continue* in the faith.

In proceeding to exemplify this position, it appeared advisable to begin with establishing a fit *preparation of the heart* for the simple reception of the truth recommended. The present

method of divine appeal to us was considered, Lect. ii. and a view taken of our condition, as subjects of a dispensation of the *Spirit*. To this general Lect. iii. statement were annexed certain detached considerations, calculated to account for appearances of rebellion and unfaithfulness, under a covenant so holy; to reconcile the heart to the painful sight of them; and to give answer to some inward perplexities concerning holy Writ itself, which might, and may, very possibly, disturb the meditations of the faithful.

We were then prepared to enter on the view proposed of the sacred volume; under which, its conformity with the existing state of human na- Lect. iv. ture was first asserted in *general*, and then *ex-* Lect. v. *emplified* in detail. A further argument of the divine intention, that *no* method should be left untried to bring reasonable creatures back into obedience, was founded on the *proportion* from Lect. vi. time to time observable in the character and *manner* of successive agents, who have ministered to that effect.

Though not an *overwhelming*, it was yet no Cf. Lect. v. Introduction. *favourable* picture of ourselves which was thus presented. Wherefore, at its close, it became expedient to pause upon the question—of the sufficiency and fitness of Scripture, so exhibited, to our *individual* necessities and desires. *This* adap- Lect. vii. tation it was attempted to trace in the last Lecture. It only remains of the original intention,

to illustrate the excellence of Scripture, as “a
“ guide through the complex relations of social
“ life.”

In truth, however, not much is necessary here to be added to previous considerations : because, as was suggested, and as increased and still increasing reflection will surely make manifest—

Lect. vii. p. 206-7. the sense of personal responsibility, before an unerring judgment to come, will, to an enlightened conscience communing with itself under a spiritual dispensation, *include* the principles of *social* duty. In fact, it is in this very point, that the superiority of Scripture, as the rule and law of social life, shines forth so transcendently. While *man*, dazzled by the brilliancy of visible and sensible effects, aims at the splendor of *general* improvements, and loves to attack *combined* aspects of error, Scripture lays the axe of reformation to the *root* of evil, chasing it to the hold where it lies hid in the *individual spirit*. It plants the seed of renewal in that soil, from which alone it can so spring, as to bear fruit effectually, let it branch forth to what extent it may. All *other* legislation and reform, however excellent in its own theory, cannot at best be more than *expedient*, and partial in its operation. It may correct specific local abuses ;

Cf. Lect. iii. p. 72, 73, 74. but it wants the *element* of universal applicability. It wants the *point from which to begin in every case alike*.

Cf. Lect. iv. p. 81, 82, 83.

To proceed, however, to the consideration of Scripture, as it bears upon questions of civil and social life.

It appears often to be assumed, in vindicating men's free right to prescribe in such questions for themselves, that the Gospel does not interfere with civil ordinances, or dictate in the arrangements of social policy. True. Christ's *kingdom* John xviii. 36. *is not of this world.*—But it may be doubted, whether all, as many as indulge such thought, consider *how far* it is true, or *why* it is true.

It is *not* true, if the thought be so extended as to involve an inference, that “religion and our civil relations are subjects separate and independent;” that “religion” is *a thing by itself*; a thing of times and seasons; a sort of robe, only to be worn in set and public places, or on high and solemn days; while much lower considerations may suffice to define the rules of ordinary conduct, in matters of mere human policy. The acceptance and belief, and *pervading influence* of the revealed will of God, ought to be *traceable* through every sentiment and rule of a Christian community, whether public or private. It need not be *obtruded* with that jealous minuteness, which seems to fear that nothing can be seen of the Creator, or Redeemer, nothing referred to the authority of either, without reiteration, in express words, of those holy names, which too freely to pronounce is rather profanation than

reverence. But undoubtedly, a loftier principle should be found *master* of *all* secondary wisdom; unquestionably, every single fiat of the lesser should be found *resolvable into a first influence* of the greater; and be seen to claim its strength by correspondence with that alone. It is not true, therefore, that Christ's religion does not interfere with even the most public of our actions or concerns, if the affirmation be so made, as to imply an entire line of *distinction* between *it* and *them*.

But if it be understood, that, inasmuch as the Gospel has already made a far better provision for all *social*, by purifying to the very inmost thought all *individual* excellence, *therefore*, it is silent upon topics, upon which it was not necessary to speak;—this is very true. Though we believe that the wonderful acquaintance with human nature displayed in holy Scripture affords the *surest* treasure of wisdom and of foresight in every question, of every kind; (through deduction from experimental facts of every kind therein recorded for *ensamples*;) it must be allowed, that the Gospel does not busily and imperatively interfere with the details of human arrangement in matters purely civil. While its code is not without specific precepts bearing upon such questions; it nevertheless seems certain, that very much is left therein to the ministration of man's best *assistant* powers,

subject to the test of a strict spiritual self-examination, under a sense of personal accountability. It is congenial with the characteristic manner of the Gospel, as a divine dispensation, that it should do so.

Cf. Lect.
iii. p.
68—70.
Lect. vi.
II. §. 3.

The question, therefore, “whether holy Scripture supplies a rule and law of life amidst the difficulties of public and economic questions on an extensive scale,” may be dismissed, as one answered by *anticipation*. It is not our purpose, to unravel the abuses and perversities of man; or to combat, in detail, objections having their foundation in *abuse only*; but to unfold “the sufficiency of holy Scripture as an universal guide to such as will, in singleness of heart, receive, and live by it.”

It will be more consistent with *this* object, to consider, what direction Scripture may supply to the believer, (as he will be affected by the conduct of others,) in certain cases of more *familiar and domestic* occurrence; under perplexities, which break in more upon our privacy, or jar more painfully upon the meditations of secret thought. A few examples must suffice for illustration of our general meaning.

Let us endeavour, then, to estimate impartially the legitimate effects of *two* Christian “principles,” which shall be described.

I. The first is that resulting from the view of social life, which appears to be conveyed through

the language of the text. *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

Ephes. iv.
4—6.

I speak, as in a Christian kingdom ; and looking at such passage, as it may be connected (in a practical sense only) with that affecting language of the same Apostle elsewhere ; *There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Let the principle be called—the “ sense of real brotherhood ;” made of force, as an obligatory principle of active duty, by virtue of a *real*, though mysterious *union* of all Christians with Christ, the *head* of all ; and let the notion of it be brought (to ascertain what practical meaning it will bear) to the test of that language of our Saviour, in which he says, *Inasmuch as ye have done this, or that, unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME* ^a.

Eph. iv.
15.

Matth. xxv.
40.

^a It is not to be denied, that all principles of “ faith” may be occasionally overpowered by the infirmities of nature ; and so may this. Yet, where faith is in its proper and healthful operation, the Christian, with that sense of *brotherhood*, which we intend, present to his mind, amidst the intercourse of daily life, will no more *dare* to be unjust, or oppressive, or malicious to another, than he would willingly injure or offend the *Head* of all, in his own proper person. The positive, practical *reality* of this brotherhood of faith will have become one of his familiar perceptions. He cannot *account for*, or explain, either its extent, or the manner of its union,

Now it is manifest, that the representation of Christian brotherhood involved in the text describes a real, existing state of things, as far as re-

any more than he can solve any other "mystery." Why should he? or why need he? But he will become deeply sensible of what importance *to himself* his behaviour towards fellow-members of the same body is; seeing that every social action of a Christian is a subject of his Lord's peculiar, *personal* interest; and that therefore he must not give offence to any brother wilfully, or by evil-doing, lest he should even do wrong unto *the Lord that bought him!*

Such representation may not at once be understood. It requires much thought, and severe inward calculation of the tenor of our spiritual calling. It assumes an actual, present influence of a belief in the high doctrine of the COMMUNION OF SAINTS; and *this* is no easy point of faith to receive with understanding: perhaps, because it is a doctrine not commonly interpreted as a rule of practice; and therefore does not so readily as others approve itself to the "reason" in respect of its *mysterious bearings*, until its *living power* has been felt, in the operation by which it comes *in contact with the necessities of daily life*.

Notwithstanding the length of this note, I cannot resist the gratification of transcribing here (I hope, at once for its illustration and support) the following passage from a volume of Sermons lately published. The subject is—"The duty of attending the sick;" on which the preacher having spoken, continues thus: "It is not merely the poor sufferer, whose distresses have awakened our pity, who is now relieved; but, strange and mysterious transfer! it is Christ who receives the benefit, and Christ who vouchsafes to acknowledge it. Hear his own words."—And then, after having quoted from St. Matthew the verses just referred to, he concludes: "Whatever motives to deeds of pity, natural reason, or right feeling, as it is called, may suggest; strong as they are, and many think that they are adequate to their

lates to the mere *outward* frame of society. *This* is what no person will deny ; in whatever measure he may withhold assent from the doctrinal inferences which we draw from it. The words evidently acknowledge a variety of talent and of station, such as the community of real life exhibits. And we think, that, by such acknowledgment, the passage recognizes and justifies a *right use* of any corresponding *artificial distinctions*, which “ experience ” may have proved to be the best preservatives of social order. But what concerns us to inquire into *now*, regards its *inward* and effectual *power* ; viz. how far it affords to Christian brethren, of each several degree, “ a right estimate of themselves and of “ their neighbours ; and, consequently, a just “ rule and law of life in their passage through “ the world.”

Cf. Lect.
vii. p. 204.

There was instanced, in a former Lecture, what we conceive to be a partial case, best understood by reference to this estimate, having its result in “ *charity*,” when we spoke concerning the diversities of power and of talent among the ministers of our own visible Church. Let the view be extended now, to other, more general branches of society.

Lect. v.
11. §. 4.

“ end, they all fall short of this. For this, we are indebted to “ Christianity alone ; to him who is *the head of the body*, in “ *which all his members*, that is, all sincere Christians, are “ *joined in holy union.*” *Sermons by W. H. Darnell, B. D. Prebendary of Durham.* London. 1816. Sermon xiv. p. 285.

Let it be considered, then, what the world's want, and consequent unhappiness, is, which arises from *this* cause—"that brethren of a common nature will not respect each other as they should;" that they will not duly acknowledge the instrumentality of *all*, under divine wisdom, towards accomplishing general good; nor feel the truth—that "not one single creature, re-deemed unto a common hope, is worthy to be trampled on, or *despised*."

I. §. 1. And first let us take an instance, where such disorder arises from the want of consistent *humility* and *justice*.

I will not here make appeal to acts of open violence and palpable oppression, but consider some of the consequences only of that disposition so very prevalent, which—while it will perhaps condemn the doctrine of man's "corruption," carried to any height, as a vision of *enthusiasm*, will yet coldly and systematically behave to fellow-creatures upon the most positively implied calculation, that "all *are* profligate and worthless;" only to be kept in order by severity and terror; or preserved in honesty, only as they are removed out of the reach of temptation.

1. To take a case that is continually presenting itself, and of which all, with common consent, are ready to complain, as involving one of life's greatest wearinesses; let an estimate be

made, under our present thought, of the manner in which so many Christian people discharge the relative duties of "mastership," and "servitude." Is it not so, that want of principle produces, on the one hand, a heartless and unthinking *tyranny*? such as cannot possibly receive (in ordinary cases) more than that corresponding *eye-service*, which alone it deserves: and on the other, a degenerate and servile spirit of *fear*? a fear, whose subjects, being suffered to *forget* the surpassing value of the *soul*, and being never made sensible of their own strict *equality* in *spiritual right*, and consequent *responsibility*, with the rulers whom they *serve* in matters *temporal*, are led to barter every better principle of fidelity in exchange for mere increase of worldly advantage, and freer personal licence, in the seasons when their task of mechanical duty is suspended!

2. Again; let consideration be directed to the far too common manner in which the great relations of "rich" and "poor" are mutually fulfilled: in particular, to that painful sight, which (it is to be feared) often checks the hand of bounty; "the acceptance of benefits followed "by the grossest ingratitude." Yet, *why* does it befall thus? It is not to be thought, that the *whole* blame lies exclusively at *their* door who are the *objects* of benevolence. It is more probable, that unthankfulness thus comes to prevail,

in such distressing measure, by reason that benefits are so much more frequently *conferred* in *pride*, than in *affection and meekness* !

Nor is it marvellous, that discontented tempers, thus hardened through all want of love, should lose sight of the true *root* of evils, under whose *shade* they pine and starve ; and seek a cure for them, through violent alteration of those merely superficial inequalities, with which (to the natural and careless discernment) they are so palpably connected. It is not surprising, that the *real* “ *equality* ” of men should be mistaken or mis-stated ; and the perfect *consistency* of *this*, with their *unequal* condition among the *perishable* things of this life, overlooked or denied. There is no Christian sense of “ brother-hood ” to be traced on either side, in all such behaviour : and is it not likely that society becomes, in these points, what it *is*, for want of it ?

I. §. 2. Let some evils next be noticed of another class ; where the mischief arises from defect of *sympathy* and tender-heartedness.

Let it be considered, what need there is of some fundamental corrective for all such things as *these* ; for the want of compassion so continually shown by minds powerful in intellect for “ intellectual feebleness ” in others ; for the harsh rejection and unmanly rudeness often exhibited towards a “ mere unpolished awkward-

“ness,” because it does not satisfy certain dictations of politer “fashion;” (which ruder outside may nevertheless conceal the most excellent wisdom :) again, for every species of that so general destitution of what I know not how to make intelligible, except by the term of “fairness;” under which we see so many grasping always at the *best* of *every* thing, yet never willing to take their turn with the *worst* of *any* thing; as if *this* world had *enough* for all to take the best to their own share; and “forbearance” were a quality fit only to be made advantage of! All these must be familiar aspects of the world’s conduct: who has not felt, or seen them—sorrowfully? and why are they not remedied?—Because no remedy short of the true spirit of Christian “brotherhood” is of power to effect their reform.

But, let the Christian (of whatever degree) only once by faith enter into the sense of his “true membership in one common body,” and he will have a principle to guide him aright through all relations of life. While the direct consequence of *false* views of “equality” (that is, of views addressed but to *fluctuating* differences, and to things that will perish with the using) is, to produce confusion and disorder, and every evil work; that of the true (i. e. views of an *equality in guilt originally*, by natural corruption, and in all *spiritual privileges* and bene-

Cf. James
iii. 14—16.

fits *subsequently*, by virtue of Christ's reconciliation,) is the diffusion and habitual exercise of mutual respect, and love, and harmony. Under such, *the brother of low degree will rejoice in that he is exalted to a noble hope*: nor will he be tempted to despise his present station, and to covet higher things; for he will have learnt concerning that, his own, which he possesses already, that it is itself *sufficiently* honourable, by reason of its substantial utility to others, and its joint fellowship in Christ. Again; the *rich* may surely rejoice at the same time *in that he is made low*, to his own unspeakable comfort; in that he has been taught to see the true value of riches, so as to *trust* in vanity no longer. Sincere, social humility will thus be formed within the higher, when they shall have learned to *respect* all their brethren; and a like spirit in the lower, when they have thus apprehended, that to murmur and rebel is to wound the *very body of which themselves are members*. The man of "intellect" will no more *scorn* a simple brother, whom Christ designs to acknowledge; and amidst fellowship of spirit, thus appreciated, will be no such character as that of *mere politeness without principle*; since all who join in the estimate will have adopted (necessarily) the Apostle's precept, *Be not conformed to this world*. James i. 9,
10.
Rom. xii. 2.

Here, then, are legitimate influences of a

Compare again, with reference to §. I. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 20—24. with 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

Christian (that is, a *scriptural*) principle, fitted to give a more healthful understanding of our social duties, and consequently to serve as a more *complete* “rule and law of life,” during our passage through a contentious world, than any which unassisted reason has power to prescribe.

I. §. 3. Look at another comely branch of the same stock, where an immense practical and social evil is too apt to arise from a temper of *censoriousness*, or *spiritual pride*.

Undoubtedly, there is found too great a forwardness in *some* minds avowedly and abstractedly “religious,” to look uncharitably upon dispositions less spiritual than their own, (perhaps, even to condemn in others what in reality are *necessary duties*;) as such may sometimes appear distorted through a peculiar medium. Now, it is not in that visible ministry before referred to, and in the province of *divine* things *alone*, that man has need of “charity” to understand in fit proportion the “talents” of his fellow men. But in all *other* departments, in like manner, there is the same necessity for a similar estimate. For a merciful and bounteous Father has intrusted to his *rational* children great diversity in *kind*, as well as in *degree*, of means subsidiary to reasonable happiness in this present life. Various “gifts” are all at work, advancing more or less the great purposes of general welfare—of a quality and habit widely sepa-

rated from the habit of occupations *exclusively spiritual*. And inasmuch as *any* gift lends aid to innocent and *lawful* increase of man's comfort, in subserviency to his ONE GREAT GOOD ; we think it surely permissible—nay, it is his *duty*, that the Christian pay its fit respect to *every* exertion, of which he himself enjoys the benefit.

His principle of “brotherhood” will stand his friend in this case also. Let him consult *this*—he will not love to revile, or quarrel with a gift or station really beneficial, merely because it differs from his own in direction or character. *Happiest* of all the brotherhood is he, that has for his own portion the inestimable “talent” of *religious* wisdom, and fervent piety ! whose especial field of *exertion* lies where his *delight* is also—beside the altar of God ! His, surely, (if he use it worthily,) is the *highest* of all gifts : let it be his *abundant* consolation, to pursue the hope of its proportionate reward !

But happy is *he* too, and not to be condemned or censured by a “brother”—who, being endowed with excellence of another kind, shall yield the fruit of that *in simplicity and godly sincerity* to the great stock of human welfare. 2 Cor. i. 12.

His reward also is in the hand of an all-wise and righteous Judge ; and doubtless, in the day of his appearing it shall be found equitably measured and plentifully conferred ! Meanwhile, Cf. Psalm lxii. 12.

let him be honoured by his brethren according to the good which he has done unto them !

I would not have this language misinterpreted into a spurious and indiscriminate *easiness*. No. If a word be spoken, or even a thought conceived, which may tend to dispense with *personal religious obligation* but to a single Christian, such thought must be conceived in ignorance, and such word is spoken to be repented of ! But an *uniformity* of spiritual advancement, or a fixed and forced equality of devotion to thoughts and things purely religious, neither seems compatible with the diversity of powers which make up the sum of social happiness, nor does it appear that Scripture itself either supposes or enjoins it. Yet (as was said) there are, who would condemn too hastily very many useful vocations ; it may be, some of the “ sciences ” or “ arts,” (let us take these for an example,) by which life is so much benefited. Now, woe to those, whoever shall set “ science ” in *opposition* to “ truth,” or make “ knowledge ” minister to “ evil ! ” It needs no proof, how *they* break through their bond of fellowship, and their allegiance to their Lord. But it is a shame to piety, that “ knowledge ” and “ true religion ” should ever be described as *necessarily* at variance ! The temptation of “ knowledge ” has been considered, and admitted to be very great ; yet is every gift of divine goodness worthy to be

Cf. Isaiah
v. 20, 21.

Lect. iv. p.
106.

esteemed *in its right use*, on every ground of reason and of gratitude. I think, a practical sense of Christian "brotherhood" may give us this rule; that "*he* best answers the purpose of his calling, (even though his calling be a subordinate one,) who, in the great community of life, most diligently cultivates *his own* talent, in the faith and fear of God; and subscribes cheerfully among his brethren the best amount of *that*." And to exercise ourselves in this manner according to the gifts vouchsafed to each, and not to measure or despise a brother's *lawful* occupation, is the best way to keep the unity of social spirit in the bond of peace.

I. §. 4. I cannot forbear adverting to one healing effect more of this same spiritual estimate of life; where the evil to be deprecated arises either from *premature and too positive conclusions*, or from *want of charitable interpretations*.

It concerns a question upon which I would thankfully forbear speaking, if silence on such a point were honestly consistent with the proposition now maintained: but to pass unnoticed what is perhaps the very greatest of all social perplexities, would *not* be honest: and I cannot think that there is *any* point in which a master principle is so much needed, in the intercourse of life, to fix a right judgment; not any point, which must so painfully distract the consciences.

tious member of a *sound, yet not infallible, Church communion*, as the aspect of “religious dissent.”

A double “unity” is broken *here*. What, then, will be the operation of this principle of “real brotherhood,” first, “in affording *relief* “under such harrassing perplexity to the sincere “conformist himself?” and next, “in disposing him to *judge* fairly and charitably concerning those, his fellow-heirs in the same spiritual promises, who have chosen to remove “their tents, and dwell apart from him?”

Suspending, then, for the present, all *other* claims of obedience to Church authority; foregoing all the rights and influence of possession and of power; and speaking only in popular terms, and on terms, in other respects, of *equality*; is it unreasonable to affirm, (where the Gospel is received and acknowledged,) that “an “established communion — of a constitution “agreeable to Scripture, saving in doctrine, “and neither corrupted by vain traditions nor “overloaded with cumbrous ceremonies, has a “*title* to adherence, simply from the fact that it “*is established*, of sufficient strength to set it “above all *lesser* objections?”

Cf. Note b.
Lect. i. p.
16.

If this be *not* unreasonable, then *certainly* the first and clearest counsel of a sense of real brotherhood (at least, to all as yet happily abiding in the courts of their proper temple) will

be—to reconcile them to a fixed spirit of dutiful conformity.

For let the offence of “schism” be put to trial, as a question of Christian *fairness*, by a very simple and familiar test. Is not *he* (in any case) the person *guilty of offence*, who, being set to travel on a common journey, *first* gives a brother *needless* (and not unreasonable) cause of *sorrow*, where that brother has given none to him?

Without apology, then, I presume to call it a thing quite unreasonable—that adherence to the outward bond of our own excellent communion should, by itself, give cause of *pain* to the feelings of any considerate person *acknowledging the mediation of Jesus Christ*. *Pain* of the sort I mean can only be caused *justly* by an apprehension of the *soul's* danger. “False doctrine,” in a visible church, is a legitimate cause of separation: perhaps “that *entire* looseness and inde-
“finiteness of interpretation which would follow
“from the want of all prescribed forms of devo-
“tion, or articles of peace,” may be another: but I hardly know what *else can* be, unless it be “a
“form of government palpably and positively
“*unscriptural*.” There are, however, many who think otherwise. Yet surely it is not *imaginable*—that any reflecting Christian can be really disquieted for *that* brother's everlasting condi-

tion, whomsoever he shall see *walking faithfully* according to *our* creed and ordinances! The disciple of *such* a church, therefore, who *essentially regulates his life according to its terms*, gives no *just* offence, or cause of pain, to any man, by his religious conduct.

But how fares it in the other case? I believe it not to be possible for the dutiful and conscientious Conformist to *help feeling* pain and sorrow for every single separation from it; even though he regard the seceder, personally, with all respect and candour, and know his life to be excellent and holy. If, withdrawing him-
 2 Cor. xi. 4. self, he still can *preach no other Jesus, whom we have not preached; if he have received no other Spirit, which we have not received; no other Gospel, which we have not accepted*;—there is a pang produced by the *very act* itself of *separation*; a blight fixed upon the heart's affection, in consequence, which charitable thought, indeed, may prevent from drying up the fountain of love, but nothing less than a re-union can remove, *as it ought to be removed*. The separatist, then, *does* cause grief to his brother; *he* does inflict a wound.

To the conscientious spirit, therefore, of the conformist, almost bewildered by conflicting tumults of religious opinion, and more humbly conscious of the real imperfections of his own com-

munion, than appears to be case with *any* others among those who differ from him;—the principle before us brings with confidence the consolatory testimony, that his “*conformity is right.*”

Must he then *condemn* the brother who has caused him pain, and all others under like predicament? No: the principle which gave assurance before, will counsel charitable construction *there*. Be the guilt of “schism” what it may in sight of *him who judgeth* it, it cannot—must not—be determined by such knowledge as ours, that *essential* “brotherhood” is at an end with any, who still make it evident by faith and conversation that they hold communion in spirit with the head, even Jesus Christ.

I fear, we are too much afraid to trust ourselves with such interpretation of charity, lest we should be charged with indifference, or unfaithfulness to our own trust; and our thoughts take, rather, the channel of hostility, or our lips the words of bitterness. *Him that is not* Matth. xii. 30. *with us*, we pronounce *against us*, and are disposed to rank him as an *enemy*. And so, perhaps, in part, (the part that belongs to *this* world only,) he may be. Yet we must see with a wider view than that; else, how shall we receive that other sentence, *He that is not against us is on our part*? Or what shall we think of the Apostle’s judgment, even where he was reprov-

Mark ix. 40.
Cf. Hooker,
Eccles. Pol.
Book 5. §.
68. or in
Collinson’s
Analysis,
p. 235.

Phil. i. 18. ing an *insincere* opposition? *Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

Cf. Isaiah
xxx. 21.

Cases like these offer perplexities—real and sore perplexities—in our lives' intercourse; so great, as that they might well overpower any imperfect outward judgment. He, however, who will live by faith of a Christian "brotherhood," and digest them deeply in his spirit, will be enabled to overpower *them*. Holy Scripture will be a sure *word* always *behind him*. This will tell him which is the straight way in this perilous wilderness, when he shall turn to the *right hand*, and when he shall turn to the *left*.

But it may be objected, that "all this is mere *passiveness*."

And if humility of spirit and the love of peace be passiveness, it surely is. But we do not think the principle here recommended can deserve such name in any *culpable* sense, when it is not possible to apprehend it rightly, so as to be *influenced* by it, without feeling ourselves bound by the closest ties to a life of *exertion*; to serve our brethren, and labour for their good, with activity and cheerfulness.

Or it may be contended, that "the impression which our reasoning would leave, calls on Christians to go much beyond the measure of *simplicity*; to lose sight of all distinction be-

“tween the faithful and unfaithful, between the
 “righteous and the wicked; or to *bow down and*
lay their bodies as the ground, and as the street, Cf. Isaiah
 “*to all that would go over.*” li. 23.

But neither is this so. The “simplicity” of
 Scripture is not simplicity of the *understanding*, 1 Cor. xiv.
 but of the *heart*. It denies not the use of pru- 20.
 dent circumspection. If it did, Christ had not
 said to his disciples, *Be ye wise as serpents;* Matth. x.
 while he bade them, at the same time, to be as 16.
harmless as doves. The Gospel would fain pro- Cf. (e. g.)
 vide us in every case with our security *before-* Rom. xvi.
hand. It would have us be careful of our com- 17.
 pany. It would direct us, like the Wise Man, 1 Cor. v. 11.
to leave off contention, before it be meddled with; Prov. xvii.
 to disallow—to renounce the *principle* of it—to 14.
 have nothing to do with it. Since, however, it
 was to be foreseen, that none would perfectly
 escape so many snares as are in the world by
 such means alone; it forbids not, that we *quit* 1 Cor. xvi.
ourselves like men, stedfast and courageous, or 13.
 wise and merciful, when difficulties have en- Cf. (e. g.)
 compassed us. Not to flatter, however, it must Gal. ii. 11.
 be acknowledged, that, after all, *endurance* is the Eph. iv. 14.
 Christian’s plainest way to conquest. He must Phil. i. 14.
 expect to bear his share, and very much beyond 2 Thess. ii.
 his share, of burdens. But he will not therefore 15.
 be discouraged. Through this very pressure, he Titus i. 9,
 will come to perceive a beautiful and affecting 13. and ii.
 15.
 Jude 3.
 Cf. 1 Cor.
 ix. 24—27.
 2 Tim. ii. 3,
 4, 5, &c.

illustration of the very highest doctrine of his religion.

For, review the course of human life, as it is to be noted in its *crookedness*: how is it enabled to proceed at all? how comes it not to be verily choked up, and stopped altogether? Is it not, in a great measure, because the *good and wise* submit to bear those burdens which the *selfish* refuse to bear; and which must, otherwise, impede the whole machine? It might be exemplified, in plentiful instances, how this appears to be an ordinary permission of Providence. Nor was it otherwise,—except as removed in infinite *degree*,—that He in whom was *no sin* died for the sins of *all men*; *the just for the unjust*!

Cf. Rom. v.
6, 7, 8.
1 Pet. iii.
18.

Such, then, we think, *might* be the work of *one* social principle, exclusively *Christian*, in conducting a believer through the world's warfare. Is it to be denied, that such an outline, worthily filled up in practical detail, (and I have forborne all mention of specific precepts, as considering that any comprehensive Christian *temper implies* its proper *ornaments*,) would give a man much greater peace with his fellow men, than any rule, merely of society, that can be named, divested of the love of Christ?

II. The power of *this* principle, however, would be occupied in *weightier* and *graver matters*; in questions of a positively moral and reli-

gious quality: an accompanying (and as it were explanatory) one might still be wanted, to decide in things *indifferent*.

And such a one is at hand; much like the other, and quite peculiar to holy Scripture: I mean, that sense of *future responsibility* which the New Testament inculcates, in the special point of *personal example in all lesser things*, before brethren *for whom Christ died*.

1 Cor. viii.
11.

But it is not necessary to dilate upon the effects of a subordinate principle, so strictly congenial with the other, of which we have been speaking. To a mind contemplating society under light and guidance of the greater, it will illustrate and commend *itself*.

One thought only concerning it shall be subjoined, which may serve a twofold purpose. If it should be objected, that “the free sense of “*brotherhood* and *real equality*, already insisted “upon, may tend to encourage too great *freedom* “of behaviour, in the Christian’s daily conduct, “or any degrading tone of *loose familiarity*, calculated to throw down important fences in society;” this collateral sense of the importance of “example” may prove the most salutary of all correctives, even in matters purely *civil*.

For it does not follow, while in spirit we regard the very meanest of our brethren as strict *equals* in the *mercies of Christ*, and as true members of *his* body as ourselves, that we must

therefore overlook the sanctions, recognised and allowed by holy Scripture, under which an *artificial inequality* has been adopted,—to the most salutary ends. Mere *familiarity*, as such, is not *kindness*; nor is it the proper fruit of that affection with which the Christian will love his brethren. We may see most convincing evidence of this in the *world's* ordinary familiarity. What more common, there, than to perceive the same person (under guidance of false principles) at once haughty in demeanour, and condescending in vice? the *tyrant* over his inferiors in all demands of *outward homage*; and yet, their equal and exact *associate* in various acts of *moral degradation*? A Christian sense of the importance of example would not permit such inconsistency. *This* would teach us, that to preserve the *character* of our respective stations is of chief importance in rendering those stations of their full utility;—that *proportion* and *harmony* cannot be violated without injury, any more in things accidental and indifferent, than in things vital and permanent;—that to become *degraded* is to betray our trust, and (as far as respects our own personal ability) to undo the very purpose of that *diversity of talents*, which God has ordained, and Christ accepted. It would teach us, that to be good and effective stewards of the grace committed to us, (be its proportions what they may,) we must be *independent*. I speak not of that

self-sufficiency, in perishable means, which the world so denominates; but of *independence* such as that with which St. Paul appealed to the Corinthians; *Receive us; we have wronged no man*, ^{2 Cor. vii. 2.} *we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man*: of *independence*, as it is alone to be found perfectly, in the dignity of Christian *obedience*; and in the exercise of that conduct, *against* ^{Cf. Gal. v. 23.} *which there is no law*.

We have completed, then, the course of our proposed inquiry, in such manner and measure as time and abilities have permitted it to be done. If it has been made in agreement with divine truth, I am willing to hope it may not be found without arguments of consolation; and that, to the believer, the “divine authority of “holy Scripture” may stand thereby illustrated and confirmed.

Be this, however, as it may; let it be thankfully and triumphantly remembered, in conclusion;—that such argument does not, after all, even *approach* those bulwarks of the Christian faith, by which it stands defended from the *unbeliever*. The “external evidences” of its divine authority abide untouched, in their strength and majesty. The glorious light of PROPHECY there shines with undiminished brightness; the MIRACLES which the Redeemer wrought there testify, that he indeed spoke his Father’s words; the SUFFERINGS AND BLOOD OF THE APOSTLES and

MARTYRS bear attestation to the truth as heretofore. Again: the “impossibility of accounting honestly, whether for the doctrines or progress of Christianity, if its own record and pretensions be not true;” the “inability to substitute any adequate rule of conduct in its stead;” these difficulties, and the like, remain in full force with the objector. Assuredly, *we have not followed cunningly devised fables* altogether, though we should have followed a defective argument *now*. These are points to be preserved in grateful remembrance.

Cf. Lect. iv.
p. 107.

2 Pet. i. 16.

The reasons for attempting an illustration of the great subject most interesting to us all, of a quality and nature like the present, removed from every pretension of adding *information* to the store of theological knowledge, or of supplying any relish to the taste of the profound scholar, were represented in the beginning.

Lect. i. pp.
10, 15, 22.

More, infinitely more, than ample satisfaction in such an undertaking will it be, if those intentions may be at all realized!—if, while the more honourable members of Christ’s body, the defenders of the Church mighty in learning, be found watching and engaged upon their posts, such view may minister to impartial thought and personal scrutiny among far humbler brethren: if it may bear witness to the spiritual workings of the reflecting heart, in solitude: if (without *abating* any of the *real strictness* of a pure and

peculiar covenant) it may cheer the *innocence* of social intercourse,—while it rejects the importunate tyranny of *fashion*, and the deceits of criminal self-indulgence: if, without compromise of essential faith, it may conduce to *charity*: if, without breach of any vowed allegiance, it may check the hasty adoption of too partial and exclusive opinions: if, finally, it may prevail with any to *persevere* in loving the truth and peace; and to bring that last, and best, and greatest argument to its support—the argument of GOOD AND HOLY LIVES.

So shall the body best *make increase unto the* Eph. iv. 16.
edifying of itself in love; and wisdom be justified Luke vii.
of all her children. 35.

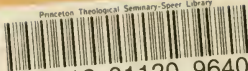
THE END.







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